THE

EVE OF SAN-PIETRO.

A TALE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

Ruin from man is most conceal'd when near,
And sends the dreadful tidings in the blow!
Is this the flight of fancy? would it were!
Heaven's Sovereign saves all beings, but Himself,
That hideous sight—a NAKED HUMAN HEART!

YOUNG.

You've wrong'd me all, and on you all—but hold—
I form Revenge too mighty to be told!

OVID'S EPISTLES.

VOL. I.

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TO

THE READER.

UNDER many doubts and apprehensions, does the Author of the following Tale submit it to public inspection, and solicit public indulgence for a first production. Unsanctioned in a Name, unsupported by a Dedication, she "lets it down the Wind, to prey at Fortune;" and while acknowledging that she has zealously endeavoured at success, yet rests her firmest reliance on the candour and generosity of the Reader.

THE

EVE OF SAN-PIETRO.

CHAP. I.

"I am settled, and bend up
Each corporal agent to this terrible feat."

SHAKESPEARE.

"He seem'd for dignity compos'd
And high exploit. But all was false and hollow."

MILTON.

IN the province of Terra di Lavora, in the kingdom of Naples, stood the Castle of Moraldi, Marchese di Morano. Strong, and impregnable, it remained, notwithstanding the sieges it had sustained, the enemies it had often repelled; while its dark lofty turrets, rearing high in air their crested

heads, seemed alike to bid defiance to the devastations of war, and the ravages of years.

Moraldi, its present possessor, was the younger brother of Bertoldo, Marchese di Albenza, whose domain extended along the river Pescara, in the province of Abruzzo. Though linked in the ties of blood and affinity, their natures were widely contrasted; and while in early life the good Bertoldo had strove to conciliate the friendship and affection of his brother, he had outwardly returned his generous advances with coldness, inwardly envied and detested him. The mind of Bertoldo was mild, elevated, liberal, and benevolent; that of Moraldi, fierce, contracted, and implacable; disdaining at an early age, alike the control of parental authority, or the bonds of fraternal

fraternal union, he left his native castle, to emerge in scenes more congenial with his inclinations; and utterly regardless of the prayers of the old Marchese, the remonstrances and entreaties of Bertoldo, left Abruzzo, and plunged at once into a vortex of riot and sensuality. Surrounded by the gay, the dissolute, and the vicious, he remembered his home but as the source from whence he was to derive the means of administering to his pleasures; and while Bertoldo watched, with unremitting tenderness and love, over the death-bed of an only parent, Moraldi revelled in the society of wantons, unmindful of the father who was sinking under the sense of his shame, and heedless of the disgrace and ruin with which he was overwhelming his ancient and illustrious house.

On the death of the old Lord, it was necessary that he should return once more to the seat of his ancestors; and it was then, for the first time in his life, that a train of new and serious ideas seemed to have engaged him; he expressed remorse for the death of his father, appeared anxious to be reinstated in the good opinion of his brother, assured Bertoldo that a reformation had already taken place in his mode of life, and ended with informing him, he had in view an alliance with Juliana, the only child and heiress of the Comte Morano; intimating, however, that the success of this object depended entirely on the favour of his brother, to extricate him from his present difficulties, and enable him to be received at the palace of Morano, as the suitor of his daughter.

Bertoldo listened with satisfaction to the words of Moraldi; his beneficent and noble spirit needed not the insinuating address of the latter, to win him to an acquiescence, which had in view the hope of reclaiming a brother still dear to his heart: he embraced him; and, in all the unsuspecting liberality of his character, pledged himself speedily to re-establish, and for the future to assist his fortunes; "but hear me, Moraldi!" he exclaimed, (as an unsteady hand trembled in the virtuous grasp of the Marchese,) "there must be two conditions: first, dismiss Ubaldo from thy intercourse; and, secondly, assure me that thy marriage with Juliana has not avarice or ambition for its object."—"Ubaldo," (said Moraldi, as he raised his eyes to the countenance of the Marchese, while strong corroding recollection

rushed upon him,) "Ubaldo, though the companion of my thoughtless hours, never was the partner of my confidence, or the sharer of my counsel; yet, while I disavow the friendship with which the Marchese di Albenza reproaches me, I must still acknowledge myself bound to Ubaldo by a principle of gratitude, which never can be cancelled. Bertoldo! but for his miraculous interference, must remember this life had been forfeited to the treachery of assassins." Bertoldo, anxious for the welfare of his brother, and solicitous to detach him from scenes, and win him from pursuits, degrading to his rank and fame, it had been his care to keep in employ at Naples, such agents and emissaries as would note the progress of Moraldi's profligate career, and thereby enable *him*, ere too late, to lead him back to repu-

reputation, happiness, and honour. His understanding, as superior to credulity as was his soul from suspicion, had never been misled as to the conduct of his brother, or his companions, by the reports of enemies, the tongue of calumny, or the fabrications of falsehood; but while he knew the common associates of Moraldi as creatures to be avoided and contemned, Ubaldo, the unknown Ubaldo, was to be feared.

It was on the Eve of San-Pietro, the night dreary, dark, and tempestuous, that Moraldi, prepared to leave the villa of a favourite mistress, regardless of the entreaties of his companions, and heated with wine; obliged, however, to be at Naples early the ensuing morning, he pursued his purpose. The road from this place was

considered hazardous to pass in the obscurity of night; and he had not proceeded far, when he was attacked by ruffians, who attempted to plunder him. Want of personal courage certainly was not the failing of Moraldi; long he defended himself with skill and bravery, till at last, overpowered by number, and debilitated with recent excesses, he was shrinking from the stiletto of his adversary, raised at his bosom, when the weapon was arrested in its course by the strong-nerved arm of one who had appeared to have been attracted to the spot by the cry of murder. The villains fled, and Moraldi felt he owed his life to a stranger. "My deliverer!" cried he, "words are but poor acknowledgments for what I owe you; yet, though for the present an adverse fortune has limited my power, I have a father, Signior,

who

who will not be tardy in testifying his gratitude to my preserver. You have saved the son of the Marchese di Albenza."——He stopt; the sudden remembrance of *that* father, together with the impression of horror left on his mind, for a moment awakened feelings to which he had long been a stranger; and during a severe internal conflict, humbled by shame, and agonized by remorse, he shuddered as he contemplated the divine interposition in his favour. Lost for an instant in a kind of insensibility to all around him, he was recalled by the voice of the stranger, whose deep and peculiar tone startled and surprised him. It has before been said, Moraldi inherited all the courage of his ancestors. Ever bold and intrepid, he spurned at the idea of danger; and where the accomplishment of any favourite object was

in pursuit, there were no difficulties his undaunted spirit would not surmount: such was now the man, whose frame, weakened by indulgence, and whose mind, enervated by guilty retrospection, shrunk timidly from a sound, and stood the victim of an imaginary terror! "The Signior di Albenza," said his companion, in accents of proud equality, "is not unknown to *me*; for though chance has this night thrown us in the way of each other—the period yet must have arrived, when the bond of obligation that links thee to me now, would be poor, in comparison to that with which it is in my power to enthrall thee. Start not!" (for Moraldi here betrayed an involuntary emotion,) "but mark me: To one great purpose have I dedicated my life; to perform a vow, registered at the pillow of a dying parent, have I

submitted

submitted to bear the burthen of an existence, commenced in disgrace, and nurtured in misfortune; in the hope, though at my latest moment, of working a great revenge: I have risen superior to the world's oppression. Your pardon, I trespass on your patience; but I would teach Moraldi, that the man before him is of no common stamp; the life I saved you, was an act of duty; the rewards of your family I disdain: *your* friendship I would possess, *your* confidence I would share; my reasons are strong, are mighty; and the period will come, when you shall know my motives." "I confess myself," replied Moraldi, "at a loss to account in what manner my friendship can prove essential to you, or the cause in which you appear to be so much interested; a stranger to your name, your character, and con-

nexions, it does not follow, that because you have (for reasons best known to yourself,) become acquainted with mine, that I should lightly promise protection to one of whose history I am ignorant: that I am in your power, is a threat so vague, so futile, and ridiculous, as exceeds all bounds of probability, and is only calculated to excite the sentiments of contempt it merits; if, however, the assistance you rendered me, was really the impulse of humanity, and not the result of premeditated design, then have you still the most forcible claim on my good offices. My friendship cannot be so easily afforded."—"My name," answered the stranger, "is Ubaldo: for my origin, it is marked in characters so black and so mysterious, that death and retribution alone can efface them; but that they *must* be effaced, is a hope,

hope, which even in those years of tender infancy, (when the buoyant and elastic spirits scarcely retain impressions for an hour,) kindled a living flame within my bosom, and warmed me into action. But you do well to spurn my offers—well to assume a conscientious guise to him who has watched your conduct, and ascertained its motives; who knows thee as incapable of acting from principle thyself, as thou art unqualified to preach it to another. Have I not observed thy progress from the castle of thy father? Have I not followed thee to the Morano palace? Aye, and when under the guilty covert of the night thou hast vainly thought deceit and treachery might lurk unseen, have I not traced thy fearful footsteps to the lone dwelling of ——— "Horror!" cried Moraldi, what art thou, that thus enveloped in

 a cloud

a cloud of dark obscurity, doth steal upon me, more barbarous than the hireling wretch from whom but now thy strange and hidden policy has saved me, to blast my name, and sink me deeper than perdition!" The time and place was, at this moment, well calculated to excite sensations of alarm and superstition; the rugged and intricate road, skirted on one side by an immense wood, whose close, embowering shades, excluding the beams of the mid-day sun, rendered it a situation of peculiar gloom and solemnity: while, on the other, a high stupendous mountain, whose lofty summit rising impervious to the sight, appeared every instant ready to fall, and crush the unwary traveller as he passed, a grotesque figure of San-Pietro, placed by the holy zeal of some pilgrims at its base, added considerably to the natural

awfulness of the scene. Not a breath stole upon the death-like stillness of the hour, save the melancholy screamings of the bird of night, whose harsh note pierced, at intervals, through the recesses of the forest; or the bat, as it flitted its ominous way over the head of Moraldi, as if presageful of those events, which from this night were to date their commencement; while a pale gleam of the moon, as it slowly emerged from the hitherto blackened vault of the horizon, enabled him plainly to distinguish the person of Ubaldo, as, wrapped in apparently deep meditation, he stood before him. He was about the age of thirty; in stature tall, beyond the ordinary size of men; in figure, well-proportioned and majestic; and of a deportment at once so lofty, noble, and commanding, as bespoke him a being of no vulgar source: for his face,

face, 'it was as a book, where men might read strange matter,' regular and handsome; yet so peculiar was its character, so various each turn and change of his countenance, that the most accurate physiognomist would have been at a loss to pronounce which was the ruling passion of his mind. In general, however, a cast of thought and reflection, an air of closeness and concealment, were legibly written on every line of his strongly-marked features; penetration and distrust were painted forcibly on his dark brow; and from the glance of his keen and scrutinizing eye, innocence itself would have shrunk timid and abashed; for it expressed each movement of a soul fitted to the blackest purposes, and capable of the most atrocious deeds. Yet so extraordinary were his abilities, so capacious his understanding, and brilliant

brilliant his talents, that the world was dazzled by the display, and all ranks of society throughout the city received and courted him. Such was the power of his conversation, that while few points were unsubdued by his eloquence, there was no argument the subtle sophistry of his reasoning did not confute. Lively, active, and vigorous in his faculties, quick in perception, solid in his judgment, and nice in discrimination; to conceive and to act, were with him synonymous; attainment crowned his undertakings, success waited on his wishes; a Machiavel himself; falsehood and hypocrisy were unmasked in his presence; and though the epitome of vice, so well did he assume the garb of virtue, that the unwary were ever betrayed, the unsuspecting beguiled; while his easy polished manners, fine person, and insinuating

sinuating address, made him, in all places, the envy and wonder of one sex, the admiration and ruin of the other.

Moraldi now remembered he had sometimes met Ubaldo at many places of public resort in Naples, when the latter had observed him with much scrutiny and attention; this incident, which had then merely excited a transient emotion of surprise, now rushed upon his mind, in a torrent of indescribable feelings, and bewildered him in a chaos of doubt and conjecture. That Ubaldo was master of a secret he had imagined locked within the keeping of his own breast alone, was a circumstance which almost led him to doubt the existence of his senses, and to conclude himself under the impression of a fearful and terrific dream; vainly,

vainly, however, did he seek the illusion, vainly did he endeavour to chase from his too faithful memory, occurrences whose retrospection unmanned him. When it happened also, that a few nights since, as he had returned by this same road, and at the same hour, that an haggard female, who was regarded by the neighbourhood as a sybil, and had her dwelling among those mountains, shot across him as he passed, and bade him "beware the Eve of San-Pietro." Horror-struck as her image flitted on his fancy, he staggered against the leafless trunk of a tree, the representative of guilt and consternation. Ubaldo now approached, and extending his hand to Moraldi, "begged him to moderate his apprehensions, assuring him, that the propagation of his secret was conditional, and rested entirely with himself;

self, still to be kept buried in oblivion."

Bind but thyself to me by an oath that I will dictate, and the man whom now you fear—aye—as the one whose very word could crush thee, shall prove thy friend, and lead thee on to fortune; but remember, one interest lives between us from this hour; one path, however narrow, must be our mutual way through life; the day that sees thee set thy hand against me, hurls down eternal ruin on thy head; therefore beware, Albenza, that hereafter no jealous fear, or envious suspicion, lead thee to wish thou could'st evade the being who, having placed thee on thy wishes' pinnacle, may prove perchance a clog thou wouldst shake off: but fear it, and avoid it, as you would the poisoned adder in its course; for know

—Ubaldo

—Ubaldo would pierce through Etha's bowels for his vengeance;—therefore" ——— "Can I," interrupted Moraldi, "seal a vow thus forcibly extorted, or agree to terms with which I am unacquainted? or am I yet so far gone in iniquity, as thus to plunge myself in added guilt, because the views and interests of a stranger demand it of me?"

"'Tis well," replied Ubaldo, coldly; "I cannot wonder that a mind so strong in conscious purity, should think but lightly of these trivial consequences: to one cased in the armour of an unsullied conscience, what is disgrace, infamy, or public"——

"Hold!" cried Moraldi, "utter not the sound,—I need not a further confirmation, to know you for the tyrant, the arbiter of my fate; say then but who

who you are; answer me with truth and candour to this end, and I will promise all that you can dictate."

"THE day will come," replied Ubaldo, "when on that point you may be satisfied; but years may yet roll over, ere that period; and trust me, they are the happiest you will know; what you require cannot be now accorded, though thus far I will assure you, the being lives not, who knows from whence I sprang."——He paused, then added, in a tone of vehemence, "Swear! or when next we meet, thou shalt tremble at my presence—'twill be"—"Hold!" cried Moraldi, while every nerve seemed contracted into torture———

"I *do* swear,—by yon great Heaven"——

"MOCKERY!"

"MOCKERY!" exclaimed Ubaldo, "priests and women make their vows by that."

"BY Hell! then," cried Moraldi, half frantic—

"'TIS a childish bugbear," which wise men scoff at.—"Swear," continued Ubaldo, drawing a poniard from his bosom, "that you wish this steel may drink the crimsoned current from your heart, when you prove false to me, when you betray this night's eventful meeting, or cease to be my colleague, and my friend. You hesitate—the issue of your refusal is irrevocable."

MORALDI, now sunk to the earth by the awe-inspiring manner of his companion, the victim of guilt, and trembling

bling for his secret, took the fatal oath! while Ubaldo, quickly assuming an air of complacency, replied—"'Tis well—on the morrow we shall meet again;" then passing through a brake into the wood, he bade him "remember the Eve of San-Pietro," and disappeared. "The Eve of San-Pietro!" repeated Moraldi; "lost, enslaved Albenza, too late hast thou remembered it!"

CHAP. II.

"From whence, but from the Author of all ill,
Could spring so deep a malice?"

MILTON.

FROM this period, Moraldi and Ubaldo became constant associates; and so powerful was the sway obtained by the latter, that while the world considered Moraldi as his patron and protector, he was, in fact, the tool of his will, and the slave of his caprice. Dissipated and profligate as before had been his career, it was blameless compared with that into which the infatuating example of his companion daily led him. Plunged into scenes of vice and intemperance, his health was impaired,

his mind enervated, and his fortune sunk; yet still he dreaded too much, to have remonstrated, even had his own inclination led him to do so: thus, satiated with pleasure, and incapable of enjoyment, he dragged on the chain of a wearied existence, while in his heart he abhorred Ubaldo, as the cause of all his sufferings. Vainly had he sought happiness among the gay and the licentious; alas! the reality was fled, while he only grasped an unsubstantial shadow, who mocked his prayers, and ever left him bankrupt in his desires. To shut out recollection and repel the forebodings of his conscience, was his unceasing endeavour; yet remembrance would follow him by day, and haunt him in the gloom of night; while conscience, as a corrosive worm within his breast, preyed upon his peace, torturing the part which

nourished

nourished it. Oft'times, too, would he return in retrospection to those days, when, with an unvitiated mind, innocence and contentment had been his own; when, loved and cherished in the bosom of his family, his hours had glided away in chearfulness and tranquillity, his slumbers were serene and unbroken. Now, often would he start at midnight from his pillow, and in all the wildness of a disordered imagination, fancy himself at the "shrine of San-Pietro," and call aloud on Ubaldo, "to keep the black, the damning secret, from all the world!" then sink again upon his couch, again to dream of horror, and to rise distracted. Frequently, after these fits, did he declare "he would seek his mysterious tyrant, and force him to an avowal of his motives, for what purpose, and by what means he had thus possessed himself of the

dearest secret of his soul; death was transport to the torments he endured—he would brave Ubaldo, though annihilation were the consequence!" But with the dawn returned hope, love of life, policy, ambition; and Moraldi, wavering and inconstant, 'a feather for every wind that blew,' now would consult his wary confederate, on a marriage with the daughter of the Conte Morano, a lady he had met at the assemblies of a Neapolitan Noble, of a most amiable disposition, but whose large inheritance was her sole attraction in the eyes of Moraldi; the sentiment of love, delicate and refined, was not in his nature; yet he had infinitely too much vanity to suppose she could prove averse, when he sued for her favour. Young, handsome, and of insinuating manners, he had found the generality of women too weak and inconsi-

considerate to resist his addresses, or even to seek beyond the surface for an excuse: how, then, was he stung by mortification and resentment, when he found the gentle Juliana not only discouraged his suit, but positively refused to listen to him. An alliance with the house of di Albenza had long been desired by the Conte her father; it is true he would have preferred Bertoldo; not because he was more virtuous than Moraldi, but that he was the elder brother; he, however, had not offered, and was besides reported to be engaged to a lovely girl of humble fortune. The Conte, therefore, invited Moraldi to his palace, at the same time commanding his daughter to receive him as her destined husband, on pain of his eternal displeasure. Juliana remonstrated, wept, entreated, but in vain, her father was

inexorable; and her lover had too little delicacy, or feeling, to desist from a pursuit, because it was overwhelming another with anguish and despair. Just at this period he received the news of his father's death; and caught with eagerness at the opportunity it presented of becoming reconciled to the Marchese: advising with Ubaldo, he determined immediately to repair to Abruzzo, and under a shew of contrition and reformation, obtain such supplies from his brother, as were absolutely necessary to complete his marriage. To this end, as has before been related, he set off for the castle, while Ubaldo, secure of his prey, and exulting in the success of his deep-laid projects, remained at Naples, to keep watch over the actions of Juliana, till the return of Moraldi for ever secured her his victim. Moraldi

raldi assured the Marchese, "though an alliance with the heiress of Morano certainly conduced to his interest, yet the regard and preference he entertained for her, promised to render it a source of mutual happiness." So feelingly did he pourtray the virtues and accomplishments of his destined bride, that the unsuspecting Marchese was easily led to believe that which he so ardently desired, and readily agreed to advance any sum required of him.

It was on the evening previous to the day of Moraldi's departure, that Bertoldo entrusted him with the secret of his heart, that he had long loved, and was now resolved to espouse, a woman of lowly birth, but who, rich in worth and beauty, had alone the power to make him happy: "Yet," he continued, "though the graces of

my Antonia would, in my estimation, add lustre to the throne of a monarch, my father had prejudices, against which, (as I could not convince,) I was determined never to have contended: it was therefore my task, during his life, to conquer my own feelings, and fly the dangerous society of her I adored; but," he added, and a tear to the memory of a parent glistened on his manly cheek, "that barrier it has pleased Heaven to remove, and Antonia will soon be mine." Moraldi listened to his brother's recital with well-feigned solicitude: Ah! could that brother have divined his inmost thoughts, how would he have recoiled from the view of each sordid and ignoble passion! Unable himself to appreciate that genuine felicity which awaited the Marchese, he was envious of the good he could never attain; and

and forgetful of the numberless benefits he had received, benefits which had never shone more conspicuously than at the present, such was the implacable malice of his nature, that he would have rejoiced in the downfal of the very man who had bestowed them. That he was the younger, had, from the first dawnings of reason, been galling to his spirit; Bertoldo, too, from having always evinced traits of a peculiarly amiable disposition, had been the darling of his father's household, and, Moraldi thought, of their father also. Unmindful that his own behaviour had but merited a parent's severest wrath, he jealously ascribed that to injustice which was the result of proper discrimination. The Marchese was now the possessor of an immense property, the inheritor of an ancient

and honourable name, he would be the beloved husband of a most angelic woman, was of powerful interest at court, and above all, had lately obtained a large estate by the death of a maternal uncle, to which Moraldi had been the declared heir, but which he had forfeited by his reprobate and imprudent conduct. It is true, in an alliance with the Signiora di Morano, riches awaited his acceptance; but they were inconsiderable, when put in competition with those of his brother. His wife, though virtuous, was certainly deficient in those personal attractions which distinguished the destined bride of Bertoldo: he had been disgraced at court, and was, beside, the slave of a being so mysterious, so inexplicable, as often led him to the superstitious and weak belief that he was under the

domi-

dominion of a supernatural power. As they sat in one of the saloons after the heat of the day, the Marchese pointed out, from the open lattice, some improvements he intended to make; and extending his hand towards a small but beautiful cottage on the right, "There," cried he, "is the dwelling of my love! and there, under its lowly peaceful roof, have passed the choicest of my days! for, oh my brother! what is wealth, dignity, or splendour, in comparison to the calm delicious serenity mediocrity of situation affords, but which the elevation of rank places beyond our reach!" When their business was concluded, and just before they parted for the night, the Marchese embraced his brother, requesting to know, in the most affectionate terms, "if there was yet any

further service he could render him?" "There is one favour," replied Moraldi, "I would still intrude on your liberality; not for myself, but a long-tried and faithful servant: my own extravagance, I blush to say it, has made it impossible for me to reward Corvino as he merits; and I desire"— "Enough," said the Marchese, "there is a cabin vacant by the death of an old servant of our house; to you I give it; it shall be the future property of Corvino, and be mine the care to recompense his fidelity." There was a peculiarity of expression in the countenance of Moraldi at this moment; a livid paleness, a vacancy of the eye, that would have alarmed any more suspicious observer than Bertoldo; but if he noticed it at all, it was merely as conceiving it to arise from fatigue

or anxiety; and again pressing the hand of his brother, besought him to seek repose; and wishing him health and rest, retired to his own apartment.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

" Thou hast it now, King, Cawdor,
Glamis, all——

SHAKESPEARE.

EARLY the next morning, Moraldi left Terra di Lavora, and in due course reached the city; it was midnight when he arrived, owing to delays on the road; but anxious to communicate his success to Ubaldo, he flew to his house, and ascending quickly to his apartment, entered it unperceived by him, who, seated at a table, seemed buried in the contemplation of some object which lay before him; on it was a small trunk, several papers, and a dagger, which appeared, as Moraldi caught

caught a hasty glimpse, to be marked with spots of a reddish hue: at this sight, the blood receded cold to his heart, a sensation dreadful as it was probable, rushed upon his soul; and forgetful of his oath, of the awe-inspiring being who had extorted it, of his situation, the hour, and all the world, he darted forward, and grasping the weapon, unable to articulate from the horrible conjectures which assailed him, stood with his eyes fixed in ghastly wildness on Ubaldo, who, without betraying the smallest sign of guilt or consternation, coolly taking the dagger from Moraldi, exclaimed in a voice of solemnity, "Hast thou forgotten the Eve of San-Pietro? Weak man! hast thou forgotten, that on a scrupulous observance of thy vow, alone depends thy preservation from a fate whose climax would be dreadful?"

"Ubaldo!"

"Ubaldo!" exclaimed Moraldi, who now seemed actuated by a desperate impulse to know the worst, "there are cases where an oath enforced can be made invalid! circumstances, where to require it, is an act of justice!"

"Moraldi talk of justice, whose practice has been but in the breach of its most established rules! Signior," he added, temperating his voice, and affecting an air of calmness and moderation, "before we part this night, we must know each other better; to those servile and faint-hearted wretches, who are content with the drudging and common lot of life, let us leave the cant of justice, the preachments of virtue and morality; to the shallow fool, who toils with mean submission through his pilgrimage of misery, unable, nay, oft unwilling, to amend his

his hard condition, by an exertion over prejudice, who, in the visionary idea of a promised after-existence, barters present happiness; to such, my friend, leave fear, remorse, and the vain bodings of the thing called conscience; to such, banish that crowd of childish apprehensions, which but now would have led thee to sacrifice thy dearest interests to the weak workings of a woman's fancy! for, granting that the dagger which you saw did bear presumptive evidence to a deed of darkness; is it, Moraldi, such a crime to rid us 'of the serpent in our way?'" As he spoke, a smile of malice gave additional ferocity to the expression of his eye: "'Seek not,'" he continued, laying his hand on his heart, "'to pierce the veil of mystery buried here; seek not'"——At this moment, when the wild looks of Moraldi were bent as if

to

to penetrate discovery through the soul of his companion, a step was heard ascending the stairs, and Corvino entered the apartment. He came fraught with intelligence, gathered from the domestics of the Conte Morano, the purport, that their master, piqued at the delay which the embarrassed situation of Moraldi obliged him to make, and dissatisfied with his excuses, was partly determined to bestow his daughter on another, who, during the absence of Moraldi, had presented himself a candidate for her hand. This news, as unwelcome as unexpected, quickly turned the current of his thoughts; and those advantages which had formerly appeared insignificant, in competition with his lost peace and forfeited integrity; now, when so near a prospect of their loss presented itself, with that perverseness so natural

to

to human beings, resumed more than their wonted force over his mind, shone in attainment more brilliantly than ever, and bitterly did he regret having betrayed feelings to Ubaldo, which might make him careless of, if not inimical to his interest; how then was he surprised, when he found their late conversation totally disregarded, and while replacing his papers in the trunk, Ubaldo interrogated Corvino more fully as to what he had heard at the palace, rallied his companion on the concern depicted in his countenance, and then assured him, if he would rely on his counsel, the Signiora should yet be his! After this, they spent the remainder of the night in concerting future plans and speculations; and early the following morning, Moraldo repaired to the Conte Morano's, whom he found, as the servant

vant had reported, wavering on which he should bestow his daughter; for already the rank of Moraldi had lost somewhat of its lustre, in the contemplation of the immense riches that would be added to his family in an alliance with the Signior Palazzi. When the mind is in a state of fluctuation, small is the portion of eloquence requisite to bring its vane to the centre of our own wishes. To fix the point was therefore no difficulty with Moraldi, who possessed great artifice and powers of persuasion. The Conte, lured back to his original intention, soon agreed to accept him for his son-in-law, promising a liberal income for their present support, and to bequeath to them the whole of his property when he died, on condition that he took the name of Morano. Moraldi readily assented; and after being

being admitted to a conference with Juliana, returned triumphing to Ubaldo, resolved never again to suffer the intrusive feelings of remembrance or remorse, to frustrate his ambitious hopes. Juliana now regarding her fate as inevitable, flung herself on her knees before her father, earnestly beseeching him to defer her marriage for six months, promising in that time "she would be the wife, the willing wife of Moraldi." The Conte, somewhat melted by her tears and distress, agreed at last to comply with her request, on condition, at the expiration of that period, she would submit implicitly to his will; fearing, if he now urged her too far, she might by some desperate step defeat his intentions, and render all his plans abortive. It is thus the wretched ever cling to procrastination as their last resource.

resource. Alas! they know not, that the delay of evil is but pouring additional bitterness into the cup of sorrow; that the keenest reality cannot equal the self-created agony of the imagination; that suspense is the scorpion of the mind; and that it requires infinitely less fortitude to rush at once upon certainty, painful however it may prove, than to bear with patience the lingering workings of a tortured fancy. During the length of six months did the lacerated heart of Juliana bear heavy testimony to these sad truths: in the course of that interval, Moraldi heard from his brother, "informing him of his marriage, and expressing impatience to hear that he also had become a husband; requesting he would soon, with his bride, take up his abode at the castle of Albenza, till that

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of Morano was ready for their reception." The offer was accepted, and three months after the date of this letter, Moraldi led to the altar the victim of his unfeeling policy and ambition. They remained at Naples some time after, in all the gaiety and splendour of that luxurious city, during which, Moraldi, through the influence of his brother, was restored to the favour of his sovereign. It was now that he would have given worlds to blot out the past, as a blackened speck, upon the fair page of his present reputation; it was now he proved the quickness of Ubaldo's penetration, for it was now that the news of *his* death would have been sweet as the note of harmony to his ear: who he was, what he was, would, even in the midst of society, abstract him from all around, and bewilder him in a labyrinth of unavailing conjecture.

Corvino

Corvino too, the mercenary tool of his former purposes, yet lived to cross his path, and fill him with fears and suspicion; but for Ubaldo, he was a clog that might easily be removed, a worm that could be crushed; yet as it was, 'that would but scotch the snake, not kill it.'—The concealment too, attached to the character of Ubaldo, had now began to spread through the city, in reports very much to his disadvantage; and becoming at last the subject of serious animadversion, it was finally resolved no longer to receive him into families of honour and respectability.—He smiled, as he turned from the gates now shut against him; but it was not the smile of a peaceful heart, rich in the possession of conscious rectitude; it was contempt for feelings his nature did not understand, but which the proud vaultings of his spirit

spirit despised: thus driven from the world, he sought in Moraldi that support and advancement the other dared not refuse; and the night before the departure of Moraldi from Naples, he solemnly promised, his first care on return should be the provision of his friend. Once more arrived at the seat of his ancestors, he was pressed to the bosom of Albenza, while the fair Marchesa welcomed her sister-in-law with smiles of ineffable sweetness. Moraldi regarded the lovely figure of the blooming Antonia with emotions that may be conceived, but not described; loving and beloved, the pride and darling of her Lord, they seemed to live but in the presence of each other, while the gaze of pleasure, the chastened look of rapture, with which he followed each movement of her graceful form, went as so many daggers to the

heart of Moraldi. No smile of connubial tenderness beamed at his approach, no sound of melting softness thrilled its approbation on his ear; his absence alone seemed to diffuse a ray of gladness over the care-worn countenance of Juliana: to her person he had always been indifferent; wedded to her estate, and of a character voluptuous, imperious, and overbearing, it may easily be supposed she was the last woman in the world to make him happy: bred under the frown of a harsh, austere parent, endurance and resignation were virtues she had early learnt, and practised; though naturally mild, gentle, and susceptible, it is more than probable, kindness and conciliation would have won from her that love, which at first was not the voluntary gift of her heart; but her husband, forgetful he had forged his own chains,

incessantly upbraided her as the depriver of his liberty, and loaded her with reproach and revilings; her meek submission he considered as the mark of a servile and apathetic mind, while her respectful attentions and assiduities still further increased his malice, and only served to harden the proud spirit they were intended to soften. Torn by contending passions, his letters to Ubaldo were sometimes written in a style bordering on frenzy. To him would he paint the contrast between *his* lot and that of his brother; to *him* describe the beauties of the Marchesa, her winning smiles and fond endearments, as bending o'er her Lord, she rose to his glowing fancy—and those smiles were not for him, those endearments were directed to the detested Bertoldo, that man, who from infancy had towered above him, the favoured of Heaven

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and of fortune. "Down, torturing image!" cried Moraldi, as he dashed the pen from his trembling hand, "let me fly from ye, thoughts that hurl me to distraction!" But whither did he fly? to the fascinating presence of his brother's wife, to add fuel to the flame which consumed and preyed upon his peace and honour. The Signiora di Morano was now in a situation, which it was in a short time expected would add to the family of her Lord; and at nearly the same period, the anxious Bertoldo hoped also to press to his heart a sacred pledge of his affections. "Thine must be a daughter, my brother!" he would exclaim; "and then, oh! then, our interests, our wealth, our families shall be still more closely united!"——"Thine shall be a daughter," wrote the artful Ubaldo, in a letter to Moraldi; "in all thou art

to

to follow his lead, in all he soars above thee!"—Excellent, ill-fated Albenza, little didst thou think, that the evening of the day, which gave a son to the hopes of thy brother, saw thy dawn set in blood.

In the course of a short time, the wife of Morano was delivered of a boy, the Marchese having made it his request, they would not leave the castle till the returning strength of Juliana rendered it safe for her to do so; adding also, that the society of his brother would make the expected period of the Marchesa's confinement pass less heavily. Juliana, naturally of a delicate frame, and with a constitution much impaired by anxiety and sorrow, was so ill, as to be pronounced in some danger, ordered to be kept in profound stillness, and even forbid the sight of

her infant, to whom she clung in idea with all a mother's fondness and delight; while her unfeeling Lord contented himself with a cold enquiry at the door of her chamber, and then departed, to devote the rest of his day to the Marchesa, whose side he never quitted, and who innocently received his compliments and marks of approbation, merely as the tribute of friendship and esteem due to her as the wife of his brother. The clock of the castle had just tolled the hour of eleven, when the Marchese, remarking the beauty of the evening, said he would walk down by the river, to enjoy the effect of the moon-light beam on its waters, desiring Moraldi would entertain Antonia till his return, he was quitting the apartment, when she caught his hand: Ah! do not leave me to-night, my husband!" she exclaimed; "I have a

strange

strange presentiment of evil, which I have tried, but cannot dispel: I dreamt last night, I was hurled by an invisible hand into the Pescara, and when I reached the bottom, that you were there to receive me. I know these are weak and childish apprehensions, but comply with me this once, and walk where you please to-morrow."

The Marchese, though he adored his wife, felt ashamed of her indulging in what he thought caprice, and laughing gaily to his brother, said "he would not be out-done even by the great Cæsar," and left the saloon. Moraldi observing the extreme agitation of Antonia, called loudly on him to return; but the Marchese was beyond hearing, and he therefore undertook the more agreeable office of consoling his lovely companion, in preference to

seeking his brother on the borders of the Pescara. He had partly succeeded in calming her uneasiness, when a shrill and piercing shriek resounded through the castle, and a servant rushed into the room, whose pale affrighted looks bore ample testimony to some dreadful catastrophe; the wretched Marchesa sunk senseless to the earth, and was borne in that state to her apartments by Moraldi, who, after consigning her to the care of her attendants, hastened into the hall to know if indeed any accident to his brother had occasioned the alarm now so general. When he reached it, he found all the domestics of the family assembled, and long was it before he could obtain from the terrified multitude, a confirmation of his fears: pious ejaculations, prayers to the Virgin, and appeals to their pater-nosters,

were

were the only answers returned to his loud and reiterated enquiries, till trembling with rage and impatience, he seized on Bianca the housekeeper, (who, in one corner of the hall, with a large groupe collected round her, was recounting some terrible event, accompanied with all the force of tears and gesticulation); and in a voice of thunder, commanded her to say the cause of this general consternation, and to inform him of the Marchese.

"Oh, my Lord!" answered the poor trembling creature, "I have lived five and thirty years in your gracious family; and little did I think, Holy Santa Maria, to have witnessed such a day as this!"

"DRIVELLER!" exclaimed Moraldi, "What have you witnessed? Dare you

thus trifle with the agony of my feelings—tell me this moment where is your Lord—or this moment shall be your last!"

"GRANT me patience!" cried Bianca, whose long service in the family had caused her freedom of speech to be much tolerated, "grant me patience from such a Signior as this: Ah! it was not with threats and blustering that my Lord the Marchese, God rest his soul, got any thing out of me: No; it was always, well, good Bianca—and now, good Bianca, to your story:—and then he would listen with such patience to all I told him—he will never listen more!" She cried, as if overpowered by some sudden recollection, "he is gone! the Marchese, the best of masters, the tenderest of husbands, the pride of the Albenzi, is gone—

gone—and we shall never, never, see him more!" Moraldi, now assured some disaster had befallen his brother, was retiring from the hall, in order to gain further information, when he met Baptista, the steward of the castle, who, holding in his hand the cloak of the unhappy Bertoldo, stained in gore, besought him, as he wished to be preserved from a sight the most appalling, to go not towards the river: "Listen, my Lord," he added, "and I will tell you all."

"Bianca had spent the evening about a mile from the castle, at the cottage of her son; and as I think it lonely for a female to go through yon wood after dark, not being required in my office, I promised to walk and protect her. The moon shone brightly; and I observed to Bianca"——"Go

on," said Moraldi, go on—" your observations are impertinent and ill-timed."

" Well, my Lord, as I was saying, the moon shone brightly, when I perceived two men stealing along the edge of the river, just under the ramparts. I communicated my suspicions to Bianca, who presently saw them also, this was no time for trifling, and we pushed forward with all possible speed, when a low hollow groan, as of a person in the last agonies, reached me; and a few paces further, brought us to the view of such a scene, as, were I to live an hundred years, I can never forget. The shore was covered with blood, while a dagger, broken at the hilt, the cloak, and this portrait of the Marchesa, left me no doubt but that my beloved master had fallen a sacrifice

fice to some of the remorseless banditti who infest the woods of Abruzzo; the river, too, near the spot, was all stained with crimson; and, too surely, the good Marchese now sleeps beneath the waters:" as he spoke, the wretched widow of Albenza darted into the hall, with her garments torn, her looks pale and haggard, her eye wild and frenzied; she instantaneously caught a glimpse of the well-known habit of her Lord, and uttering a scream that vibrated to the hearts of all around her, clung in convulsive violence round the good old Baptista; then pressing the crimsoned vestments to her lips, she raised her meek eyes to Heaven, and crossing her arms on her bosom, feebly articulated, "It is Thy will, Thy will, great Heaven, and I must not complain!" In a state of torpid derangement was she carried to her bed, from which

which she never after arose, for three hours from the time which consigned her Lord to an early grave, she gave premature birth to a male infant, who survived its mother but ten minutes. In the mean while, Moraldi had the river dragged near the place where the fatal accident had happened, but to no purpose, the body was never discovered; and soon after the funeral honours had been paid to Antonia and her hapless babe, the new Marchese, with his family, departed for Naples. Before he left the castle, he discharged nearly all its ancient domestics, retaining only Bianca, whom decency to the memory of his brother obliged him to keep. Masses were then performed for the repose of the late Lord, and Corvino put in possession of the cottage, with the care of the castle as his trust. In the course of five years spent

at

at Naples, in a style of princely magnificence, the old Conte di Morano died. In the course, too, of that time, Ubaldo became forfeit to the laws of his country, for having in the heat of passion killed a man with whom he had quarrelled at the gaming table; condemned to die, the morning was appointed for his execution, when at the moment he was expected to come forth, what was the astonishment of the multitude! to see the gaoler rush forward on the scaffold, and declare the culprit was missing; every reward was now offered, every search made, to find some clue to his retreat, but in vain, he was never after seen or heard of; and in the space of some months the affair was forgotten, excepting in the minds of a few, who, though they did not dare deliver their sentiment in public,

public, yet could not avoid suspecting the Marchese di Morano as being privy to his escape; who, from the death of the Conte, resided entirely at the castle in Terra di Lavora. Such were the events that marked the early life of its present possessor. Twenty years from that period, is the one when this history commences, a period when the inhabitants of the castle consisted of the Marchesa, now fast approaching that end she had so long desired; for, worn out by the harsh treatment of her Lord, she was sinking gently into the tomb, patiently looking forward to 'another and a better world;' for that peace, of which his violent and irascible disposition had long deprived her; an orphan girl, protected by her benevolence; and their only son Rinaldo di Albenza, a young man, whose amiable

amiable disposition, brave and exalted spirit, polished manners, and strikingly handsome person, conciliated the love, and gained the respect and applause of all who knew him.

CHAP. IV.

"Mourn not, the troubled heart at rest,
How still it lies within the breast;
Death to the wretched whispers peace,
And in the grave all sorrows cease."

For three successive nights had Viola di Benincasor watched by the pillow of her dying protectress, unmindful that her own health gradually declined in her unwearied efforts to restore the broken and sinking constitution of the ill-fated Marchesa. Viola was of that order of beings on whom the voice of humanity vibrated so strongly, that she would have tended the couch of the poorest menial in the castle with

equal

equal care and assiduity as now found her the constant attendant by the bed of declining greatness. It is true, the consciousness of fulfilling one of the most sacred duties of nature, would in that instance have whispered peace and pleasure to her soul; but in the present, she viewed the faded form, the shrivelled hand, the dead sunk eye of the Marchesa, as so many sad omens of her own forlorn and isolated state, as the grave in which her small portion of terrestrial happiness was to be entombed. "Alas!" she cried, "wherefore was the unwelcome gift of existence bestowed on me? a wretched, hapless orphan, reared by the casual bounty of a stranger, supported by those on whom I have no claims; deserted almost at my birth by parents whose province it was to have fostered and protected me; what, when thou, blessed

blessed suffering saint, shall have regained thy native heaven, what will become of me? the child of obscurity; perhaps," she added, her whole countenance glowing with the reflection, "of disgrace, of dishonour."

EIGHTEEN years ago, a basket carefully wrapped up, and directed to the Marchesa, was brought to the castle by a countryman, who having deposited his charge, was out of sight in a moment; the domestic carried it immediately to his mistress, who, on opening it, found, to her great astonishment, that it contained one of the most beautiful female infants she had ever beheld. It slept; and as she gazed on its innocent and placid countenance, the big tear started to her eye, and fell upon its cheek: "Poor blossom!" she exclaimed, "with whom dost

dost thou seek an asylum from the keen blightings of the pitiless world?—with one who has felt its storms, and buffeted its tempests. Ah me! can I, unable as I have been to contend against the adverse winds of fortune myself—can *I* shelter thee? She raised the child in her arms; it smiled upon her in its slumbers; she pressed it to her bosom—"Yet I will cherish thee!" she cried, "poor, deserted little one; will guard thee, if possible, from the snares of vice, the cold contemptuous charity of the unfeeling, from the shafts of malice and adversity." To her faithful attendant she now entrusted the little burthen, and then proceeded to examine the basket, in hopes she might find some clue to the developement of this extraordinary adventure. It was lined with cloth of the finest texture and most delicate whiteness:

whiteness: "Sad remnants of better days," sighed the amiable Marchesa, as she passed her hand over the quilting, and felt, or fancied she did so, something like paper sewed between the linen, her heart bounded; hastily she tore it from the basket, and found indeed a small packet, with her own name on the envelope. Trembling she unfolded the papers, and began to read; but she had not gone far in her perusal, when, as if a basilisk had met her eye, she started, and turning pale as ashes, had scarcely time to reach the bell for assistance, ere she sunk on the floor. "Great God!" she exclaimed, "is this to fill up the measure of my calamitous life? am I destined to be"—She stopped—the words died away on her lips. Bianca would have called for help, but she could not disengage herself from the convulsive

grasp

grasp of her Lady, who, unable to articulate, yet appearing to be half suffocated with emotion, was muttering inwardly to herself, and striving in vain for utterance, in a little time, however, she was, by the zeal and attention of the housekeeper, restored to something like composure: her first words were, "Bianca, where have you placed the child?"

"WITHIN my own chamber," answered the affrighted creature; "I met my Lord the Marchese on the stairs as I was bearing it away, but being covered in my apron, he knew not what I carried; so I laid it carefully on the bed, my Lady, and it sleeps now so soundly, and looks just for all the world like an angel. "Peace, good Bianca," answered the Marchesa, and observe me; "circumstances of the

the most important nature demand that this affair should be for ever consigned to oblivion; you must, therefore, here solemnly promise, never to divulge what you have witnessed relative to this infant, but join with me in declaring it to be the orphan of some peasant in the neighbourhood, whom I mean to educate and bring up:" then turning quickly round, she added, in a voice of terror, and lowering her tone almost to a whisper, "Where! where are the papers? Let me hide them from all human sight—let me crush them for ever! ——Yet ah!——No, no; I cannot crush remembrance—I can never obliterate from my thoughts these dumb mementos of guilt and horror!" A step was now heard in the outer room, and with a look of wildness and affright, she collected the scattered papers

pers into her bosom, and hastened from the apartment, again cautioning Bianca to be faithful, and tender over her charge. From this time all remains of chearfulness fled the brow of the Marchesa; the efforts she had hitherto made to appear at ease in the company of her Lord were no longer exerted; mournful and abstracted, she avoided the presence of strangers, and gave up all society, while her sole delight was in watching the progress of her son's education, and in inculcating lessons of morality and wisdom on the pliant tablet of his mind. Seldom did she see the Marchese, for his visits, at best, were cold and uninteresting; in general they were spent in severe animadversions on what he termed her moping discontented disposition, or in venting on her those sallies of rage and ill humour, indifferent persons

would not have tolerated. From earliest youth he had formed his opinions of female worth among the most depraved and abandoned of the sex, accustomed only to associate with mercenary prostitutes, the pure presence of his wife was a restraint; her very virtues were hateful to him; for truth *would* paint the contrast, in colours so forcible and vivid, that conscience sickened at the picture. To have known her less perfect, to have proved her faulty in any one instance, would have given him the proudest satisfaction; as it was, she was destined to be his reproach, without being able to effect his amendment, his reproof, without awakening his repentance. It must be confessed, however, in a general way, the Marchese had attained the happy faculty of blocking out that intrusive visitor call-

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ed remorse; nor was it by the ordinary mode of flying from its attacks, that he did so, to the delusive arguments of his former companion, Ubaldo, he owed the power of refining on vice, the art of reducing all things to so false a system, that he became at length able to reflect on his most atrocious actions, without shame, and without compunction: still there were times when the sting of conviction would pierce deeper than usual; and then, if the reports of his domestics were to be credited, when the loud blast howled around his chamber and shook the lofty turrets of the castle, when the thunder roared above his head, and the lightning darted its forked terrors through his casement, then would he start trembling from his pillow, and with an eye following some shadowy form, utter ravings that sunk

deep into the hearts of those who heard him. The introduction of the little Viola he had scarcely noticed, wholly given up to his pleasures, and constantly engaged in the pursuit of some fresh intrigue, domestic occurrences had no claims for him; *he* had rarely seen her, while each succeeding year witnessed the increasing fondness of the Marchesa for her protegée, and saw *her* giving fresh proofs of merit to deserve it. When the young Albenza left Terra di Lavora, to travel, she remained the sole companion of her benefactress, who, in forming the mind of her engaging and ductile pupil, experienced a satisfaction she had little hoped ever again to have tasted in this world. Highly accomplished herself, she had small difficulty in perfecting Viola, not a word escaped her lips, that she did not treasure as a sacred

cred relick on her memory, and at the age of seventeen, Viola di Benincasa added to a sound and brilliant understanding, a noble and ingenuous mind, one of the most interesting persons that ever was beheld. To that dignity, which, notwithstanding her dependant state, excited involuntary respect, she united a form so light, so elegant, so sylph-like, as might have characterised a nymph of fabled antiquity; her countenance was the index of her pure soul, and there was a sensibility and sweetness in the "liquid circle" of her fine dark eye, that rivetted attention, and enchained the heart. Such was the fair being, who now bent in sorrow and commiseration o'er the dying couch of the neglected Marchesa di Morano. On the third evening of her confinement she seemed somewhat better; and stretching forth

a hand to Viola, who sat solitary and sad by her bed-side, "Come nearer to me, my child," she cried, "I would remonstrate with you on the weakness of thus indulging useless regrets; rather ought you to rejoice that my pilgrimage of sorrow is nearly terminated, and that the haven of my wishes appears in sight: for what but the hope of rest and tranquillity in another world, could have supported me under those heavy trials, which, patient as I trust I have been, were sometimes almost beyond my sufferance. My Viola, my child, do not weep! Next to the fond idea of my darling boy, thou hast been my heart's best consolation; and would you now, by a grief which I cannot alleviate, embitter the closing moments of my wearied life?" Viola could not speak; she raised the cold hand to her lips, she bathed it with her tears, but words

words were denied her. "Check, my good girl," continued the Marchesa, "this too lively effusion of sensibility; believe me 'tis a most dangerous gift, and will plant many a thorn around your heart. Perhaps you'll think, a spirit, wounded by neglect, and chilled by disappointment, as mine has been, will only present you with the gloomy side of the prospect, ah, no! I understand your feelings, I honour them, but I have too much regard for your future welfare, not to warn you against an indulgence, which, at a period when others look forward to many happy years) sinks me a martyr to the tomb." She stopped, overcome by her exertions to speak, and her head sunk back upon the pillow. Bianca, who, with the Marchesa's attendant Laurentine, constantly watched in an adjoining room, now entered

the chamber: at the sight of her, the invalid raised her languid eyes, and feebly demanded if any tidings had yet arrived from the Marchese, or his son? The faithful old servant shook her head—"My young Lord could not be apprised of your illness till last night, my Lady, or depend on't he would have been here long ago; he is on wings by this time, I doubt not; for my Lord the Marchese"——she added, lowering her voice, and addressing Viola, "he never was in haste, but to do mischief; where there was any good to be done, the Signior Moraldi, God bless him, was ever sure to be behind hand." Viola looked angrily towards her, and placed her finger on her lips. "What is the hour, good Bianca?" demanded the Marchesa, a look of restlessness and inquietude pervading every feature: "About eight, or half past,

past, my Lady. And this day is——
"the Eve of San-Pietro," answered the domestic. The Marchesa groaned, and covering with the bed-clothes her pallid face, seemed anxious to conceal its expression. Viola had often thought there was some secret grief, beyond even the harsh treatment of her Lord, that at times pressed heavy on her spirits; this conjecture was now strengthened, for the emotion she evinced at the mention of the "Eve of San-Pietro," convinced her it recalled some painful remembrance. The evening was now far advanced, and the Marchesa seemed much exhausted: Viola tenderly conjured her to take some of the reviving cordial prescribed by her physicians. Meek and unresisting, she complied: "I am past all medicinal aid," she said; "but for your sake, and that of my adored Albenza, I will

adhere to the directions given me. There is, however, one condition I have with you; promise you will pay attention to your own health, and to-night, at my request, take rest; your colour is faded, and there is a paleness on your cheek which alarms me." She then stretched out her arms, and received Viola in her maternal embrace. "Protect and prosper this thy innocent creature, mighty Heaven!" she exclaimed; "and oh, in these last awful moments, press not the yoke beyond my strength to bear." Viola now rose from the ground, on which she had been kneeling, and silently closing the curtains, withdrew; Bianca still keeping her place in a large arm-chair, her chin resting on her stick, in an attitude of deep rumination, while our heroine softly shutting the door, descended through the saloons

loons into the garden, in hopes of finding benefit from the air.

For some time she traversed the lawn with an unequal and hasty step, then stopped, and involuntarily contemplated the scene before her; for the Sun, sinking in the west, cast a vivid glow over the surrounding landscape, and added to the mild lustre of an Italian hemisphere, an appearance at once grand and beautiful. The castle was seated on an amazing eminence, commanding an extensive prospect of the vale below, to its right was Monte Cassino, rearing high its majestic head; and on the left, plains of the freshest verdure, intersected with a variety of those clear mineral springs, so peculiar to this enchanting spot: fertile corn fields, vineyards, and groves of the myrtle, citron, and orange, gave rich-

ness and luxuriance to the whole, impregnating the air with odoriferous perfume. On the top of the Monte Cassino stood an ancient benedictine monastery, the Abbate of which was Confessor to the Albenza family; a man of an haughty demeanour, severe in the observance of all ecclesiastical rites and ceremonies, still more rigid in the denunciation of penances; and though many conjectured the holy father had not always been a Saint himself, he punished the most trivial offences with a harshness and severity very incompatible with the merciful ordinations of his sacred function: over the Marchese, who was his patron, he possessed unbounded influence; while, on the contrary, his wife and son seemed to regard him with dislike and distrust. Twilight was now gradually diffusing its sombre shade, and

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the sinking rays of the departing Sun were just seen faintly to tinge the spiral tops of the abbey; not a leaf trembled in the gale; a stillness as of a suspension of nature pervaded all around, and threw over the sinking spirits of Viola that kind of religious awe little removed from superstition. She listened; she almost fancied the dying groans of her beloved Marchesa floated on the distant breeze, and shuddered as the blush of shame passed over her cheek for the sensation. "Ah! wherefore," she exclaimed, "this unconquerable apprehension? Wherefore is it that the approach of death, the common portion of mortality, should thus fill the mind with inexplicable feelings? or that the emancipation of the soul, from this its frail and brittle tenement, should ever be accompanied with the pang of regret?" The idea led her into a train

a train of reflections very unlikely to restore tranquillity to her bosom: "Even the Marchesa," she continued, pursuing the thread of her own thoughts, "even the Marchesa, so good, so angel-like, so faultless, seems sometimes to wish a further respite. Yet, have I not often heard her say she looked forward to the hour of dissolution, as the hope that supported her existence? Too surely, then, her impatience to see the Marchese, her agitation at the mention of this day, all, all, portend some secret uneasiness disturbs the quiet of her parting moments." A rustling here startled her, and turning, she observed the tall figure of a Monk, wrapped in the sable vestments of his order, winding round the dell below, and proceeding towards the castle. Her eye followed his footsteps while he remained visible, and

when the increasing vapours obscured his form, she inwardly supplicated his visit to the poor sufferer might administer peace and consolation. As she energetically raised her hands in devotion, a strain so full, so solemn, so celestial, struck her ear, as lulled every feeling of her soul into that kind of mild serenity, which, though affecting, is soothing; though awful, is delightful. Again it swelled in notes clear and harmonious, then died away in soft murmurs among the rocks and caverns of the mountain: it was a requiem to the soul of one just gone forth. Viola sunk on her knees; "Holy Virgin!" she cried, "if the prayer of one sinner *can* reach the Throne of mercy in adjuration for another, receive, great Providence, this thy servant newly departed; be his virtues registered on the page of thy all-bountiful

tiful clemency; his errors and his frailties effaced, and unrecorded." Tranquilized by this appeal, she arose and moved towards the castle, the loud beat of the clock warning her it was time to return. Darkness had already spread its mantle on every object; and she feared, from the motion of the clouds as they chased each other in rapid succession, that the recent calm had been but the preliminary to an approaching storm. As she hurried along, something brushed past her, and looking up, she beheld the Abbate Zanotti; his cowl was placed so as to conceal every feature except the eyes; they were bent (as far as she could distinguish) with all the force of their penetrative expression on herself.

"SAVE you, holy father," she faultering said, bowing low as he passed.

"PEACE

"PEACE be to thee, my child; our good daughter is, I fear, fast gaining her final home; and I grieve to say," he continued, "is averse to making such full and free confession of her inward thoughts, as is required of all true believers in our holy mother the church, and is necessary to the insurance of eternal salvation."

"GOOD father," replied Viola, respectfully, "do you then deem confession an indispensable duty, where absolution *must* be superfluous? Has not the whole tenor of the Marchesa's life been one continued act of virtue, piety, and benevolence? and are the same mortifications requisite for the repose of her pure spirit, as are intended merely as alleviatives to the trembling and apprehensive sinner? With God she has long been at peace; and

and that she regards a mere ritual ceremony as inefficient, I cannot wonder."

ZANOTTI regarded her some minutes in silence, and then sarcastically demanded, "Whether, among the amiable qualities of the Marchesa, *that* was to be included which had taught an inexperienced young woman to despise the established principles of her country's faith, and to treat the chosen ministers of its laws with contempt?"

"OH!" exclaimed Viola, her fine countenance beaming with the energy of her feelings, "no longer shall the Castle of Morano be a refuge for distress, a shelter for misfortune, an asylum for persecuted innocence! now, alas! the wretched may cry in vain for

for pity, and suffering virtue call unheeded for relief! The Marchesa inculcate contempt for religion!" she added, her whole face glowing with indignation: "Holy father, she early taught me to consider it as a sentiment of the heart, not enslaved by prejudice, or fettered by superstition; to practise truth and sincerity, as the first attributes of that Being, to whom the humble offerings of an ingenuous mind are the most grateful sacrifices."

ZANOTTI gazed upon her attentively, and, though the darkness nearly hid her from his sight, experienced a revulsion of thought and feature he knew not how to define. Certain it is she had awakened some extraordinary recollections: he paused,—again regarded her,—again reflected,—then drew

drew his garments round his person, and passed on in silence.

When Viola reached home, Bianca was waiting at the door of the saloon to receive her—

"Santa Marie be praised, Signiora, you are here at last! I sent Giovanni to seek you all over the castle, for my Lady is anxious to see you before she settles to sleep. She has had two alarming fits since you went out; and the physician, who is just gone, declares she cannot hold another."

"Signiora Viola," continued the housekeeper, who added to an uncommon share of curiosity, great love of the marvellous, "do you not think something lies very heavy on the mind

mind of my poor dear Lady? As I sit watching in the anti-room, I hear her groan and sigh so deeply; then, every quarter of an hour, she sends me to the window, to look if I can perceive either the Marchese or his son. Truly I take her but little comfort, for my poor old eyes cannot stretch very far; and, even if they could, I much question whether they will behold the Marchese till the breath is fairly out of her body."

"But the Signior," interrupted Viola; "some cause, of which we are ignorant, must detain him. A son so dutiful, so scrupulously attentive as he has ever been to his mother, would not voluntarily absent himself at such a crisis as this."

"I know not," replied Bianca, "the

" the Signior, it is true, *was* one of finest, aye, and one of the best young men that ever the sun shone on! Spirito Santo! never shall I forget the day when he mounted his horse at the foot of the hill yonder. You remember it, Signiora; yourself and the Marchesa had walked thus far with him on his road; I was just returning from the cottage of poor Gradisca, in the valley, and as he bowed to the Marchesa, and bent his eyes on you, Signiora."

" On me, good Bianca! oh no, no!"

" But I say yes," cried Bianca, angry at hearing her story thus interrupted. " Holy Virgin! these young ones are such touchwood! Surely you will allow the Signior to have

have the use of his eyes, and I much question if, among the vain and titled Ladies of the Court, he has ever seen one so worthy his regards as yourself, Signiora. But, as I was saying, when he mounted his horse, methought the very person of his uncle and my ever dearly beloved master stood before me: if you will believe me, Signiora Viola, I looked at him till I was frightened; and, moreover, I could not help thinking that if I were my Lord, the present Marchese, the sight of him would give me many any heart-ache."

"Most true," replied Viola, sighing; "for there is in the recollection of things once dear, but now lost to us for ever, a sensation far beyond regret, far beyond common sorrow, or describable suffering!"

She wiped the tear from her eye, and taking the light from Bianca, bade her order the servants to rest, and then turned towards the great staircase leading to the gallery which contained the Marchesa's suit of apartments. Slowly she ascended, the rain now beat heavily against the casements, the wind howled around the immense building, and the castle seemed almost to totter beneath its violence. An involuntary horror stole over the mind of Viola, and a sad presentiment of future ill took possession of it, and threw a terror over her whole frame; she stopped before a large bow-window, which took in an extensive view of the country, and looked fearfully around her—"Alas!" she cried, "how changed from the gay morning scene, I contemplated with so much delight! how are ye faded,

faded, nor leave behind one faint vestige by which to trace ye; such is the dawn of youth; for, drest by the glowing hand of fancy, it promises eternal sunshine, and tells so sweet a tale of love and happiness, as charms the soul and lulls it into rapture; but ah! soon comes the noon, and with it such a train of doubts and fears, and of alloys, as chase our dreams of bliss, and every heated vision bursts in vapour; last then arrives the night, and with it disappointment, truth, conviction; then, when the sickening eye gleams o'er the wreck of blasted hopes, of blighted prospects, and of torn affections, what's left the withered heart?—To break; and, locked within the precincts of the grave, to close its earthly cares and sink to rest." She wept and moved from the window; for the wind, penetrating

through its aperture, nearly extinguished her light, she now entered the saloon, and, as her eye glanced accidentally on one of the large mirrors, she thought something dark and shadowy was reflected in it: rivetted to the spot, she raised high the lamp to ascertain whether indeed it was reality, or a phantom of her own creation; but, whichever it might have been, she saw it not again. She looked around the apartment; all was still, save now and then the distant murmurs of the thunder, or the tall trees of the forest, as they waved, agitated by the blast; she had, however, just reached the small flight of stairs leading immediately to the rooms of the Marchesa, when a sound, as of a low restrained footstep, caught her attention; again she turned, and again, by the feeble glimmer of her lamp, fancied

cied she saw the same sable figure receding from her view. However the mind of Viola sunk beneath the pressure of retrospective misfortunes, the moment that an existing evil called her to trial,—fortitude, energy, and exertion, were her peculiar characteristics; in a calm and steady tone she demanded, "Who goes there?" but no sound, save the echo of her own, answered to her call; and, carefully extending her veil to preserve the lamp, she reached, without further interruption, the chamber of the Marchesa. As she approached the bed, a sigh, as from the very bottom of the heart, reached her ear, and when she opened the curtains, she started back at the great and visible alteration which but two hours had made on the appearance of her friend. Her looks were livid and ghastly, the smile of

hope and placidity which before had illumined her countenance, had now given place to a wandering unsettled look, evidently denoting that a war of conflicting emotions raged within her. "Viola!" she cried, "the Marchese comes not, and I die o'ercharged with a secret which congeals the very life-blood of my heart: Thou knowest, oh Heaven! that my morning prayer, my evening's last orison, has been but to be spared a trial like this, but to be portioned such a share of misery as this poor weakened lacerated bosom might, in its feeble strength, support without one murmur or reproach to thee! How vain my prayers! how useless my prostration, this dreaded hour can witness:—to confess were agony, destruction! and oh! concealment is but to plant eternal thorns and stings upon the clay-cold pillow of my

my grave! Moraldi! cruel, unfeeling husband! little dost thou think what anguish rends this bosom! Yet, too sure the day will come when thou wilt feel worlds were too poor a ransom to redeem them! My boy!" she cried, the hot tear chasing down her hollow cheek, "why art thou thus forbid a mother's last embrace, a parent's parting blessing? Relentless man! when the dread fiat shall be sent to thee, Moraldi, the hovering spectre of thy hapless wife shall drive thee to despair! Yet, oh! not so, Great Providence! I cannot wish him punishment!—Grant, when thy interposition is most requisite, thy mercy and forgiveness to the father of my innocent child." Her voice here grew fainter, respiration became short and difficult, and drops of cold perspiration chased each other down

her forehead; poor Viola scarcely knew how to act, or what to think; she flew towards the door to call for help, when the Marchesa raised her head and motioned her to return.

"My child," she cried, "all the comfort, all the consolation it is now in my power to receive, it is in *yours* to bestow; from every one would I disguise my feelings, save *you*, in whose ability it lies somewhat to meliorate my afflictions. Pity me, Viola, but do not think me guilty; pardon the alarm I cause you, and, oh! entreat that I may obtain such a portion of tranquillity as may enable me to enter with calmness on a subject it has long been torment for me but to reflect upon."—To have supposed criminality of any kind attached to the character of the Marchesa di Morano,

was

was not within the compass of Viola's thought. She looked at her for some time, under the fixed impression that anxiety, together with the violence of the fever, had certainly affected her reason. This, however, proved not the case; on the contrary, she seemed more composed, the fever was abated, and a coldness of the most alarming nature seemed stealing over her. Viola took her hands; she pressed them to her lips, she warmed them in her bosom—

"My more than mother!" she exclaimed, "if you would not overwhelm your unhappy Viola with an accumulation of sorrow, moderate these transports; some dream, some wandering of the imagination, the common effect of illness, has thus disturbed you. Trust me you will be

 better;

better; yet live to see the Marchese, and to clasp your son!"

"NEVER," said the Marchesa; "in this world we shall meet no more; even now I feel life is ebbing fast, and that I must be brief: listen then my best child, and mark me:—*You* are the cause, the innocent cause of all you have seen me suffer!"

"MERCIFUL Heaven!" exclaimed Viola, "what is it I hear?"

"If you give proof of such violent emotions thus early," cooly replied the Marchesa, "how am I to hope you will ever bear the trials you are fated to endure, with fortitude and resignation?"

"I WILL be calm, I will hear all, bear

bear all for *your* sake; but yet I conjure you, by every thing that is dear between us, to say who and what I am; who are my parents, and wherefore am I thus abandoned by them?"

"UNHAPPY girl!" said the Marchesa, in a solemn tone, "you know not what you ask. The knowledge you seek, would but deprive you of that peace which ignorance alone can secure you. This is no time for evasion; and, on a condition, which you must promise to fulfil, rests all my hope of comfort in my departure from this world. I never deceived you, my child, with any false account of your birth; though, for certain reasons, it was necessary I should my family; to this moment the Marchese knows you but as the orphan of some lowly cottager. Enclosed within the basket in

which you lay, were papers which circumstantially informed me of every thing relating to your birth and origin: to my protection were you consigned, with a solemn charge never to reveal the secret reposed in me. That I have fulfilled this duty most religiously, witness Heaven! but sad has been the confidence to me; and, oh! fatal would be its communication to *you!* There exists but one person to whom I could unburthen my loaded mind, and that is now impossible. Viola," she continued, drawing from under her pillow a small key, "take this; in the closet in my dressing-room there is a cabinet, open it, and in one of the recesses you will find, by the nicest observation, a secret spring, press on it with your finger, and within is contained the packet I mentioned, sealed up; it is your own history;

history; a dark, a dreadful one! Will you solemnly assure me, as soon as possible after my decease, you will burn that packet, and———"

"ALAS!" interrupted Viola, "what is it you require from me? destroy, even within my grasp, the very means, perhaps, of recovering parents, friends, protectors! Cruel Marchesa, never till now did I suppose *you* capable of injustice!"

"INJUSTICE!" exclaimed the Marchesa, in an agony; "this is too much, mistaken Viola; thou hast no friends, no home, no——Ah! what would I say? Thou art the child of———Thy parents are for ever dead to thee.—Oh man! when in the moment of thoughtless riot thy grovelling vanity boasts the daughters thou hast ruined, the wives thou hast betrayed, could

conscience picture such a scene as this, and all thy nameless children rise in desolate perspective to thy fancy, how would'st thou shudder at each wreck of virtue, and curse the hour when blemished nature owned a blot like thee!"

"YES, then," said Viola, after some moments of deep rumination, "too surely all hope must for ever be extinct. My generous benefactress, forgive me, I knew not what I uttered, and I fear my rash extravagance has hurt you; believe me, not for kingdoms would I plant a thorn within the tender breast that fostered me; and be assured the remainder of my life shall prove the precepts you instilled were cherished here, and, from the force of your most pure example, the sullied offspring of licentious love shall

shall rise above the ignominy bequeathed her; for here I promise, as I do hope to prosper here, or wish for life hereafter, to burn the guilty vestige of my birth, nor dare to lift the veil which your compassionating hand has drawn, to hide a mother's wrongs, a father's vices."

While she spoke, every beautiful feature beamed with the pride of conscious worth and dignity, as, with her soft eyes raised upwards, she bent over the pallid form before her, breathing peace and benignity. The last words of Viola seemed to have communicated comfort and assurance to the dying Marchesa; she thanked and blessed her, earnestly beseeching Providence to shield and watch over her.

"Notwithstanding," she continued,

tinued, "the great wealth which I brought my Lord, it is not even in my power to provide for you. The mistaken confidence of my poor father left all to the generosity of the Marchese. Alas! he has none; and so sordid has been his treatment of me, that I have scarcely ever been able to appropriate the smallest sum to the important duty of assisting my fellow-creatures. When his death shall put my beloved Albenza in possession of his birthright, my Viola may rest assured she will then find a friend; till which time, you must trust to those talents and acquirements with which you are endowed, for a more honourable subsistence than any dependence upon the rich and great can possibly afford you. In my desk are three letters, one to my son, one to the Marchese, and one to the Abbess of

the

the Convent of the Santa Ursulina, at Naples, she is my particular friend, and with her you will find an asylum till some proper pursuit is marked out for you. A trifle, all I have to transfer, you will find with the letters; it is, I trust, sufficient to defray any expenses you may immediately incur, and place you above obligations to strangers. This is but preparing for possibilities, my Viola, for I have no doubt but that your amiable disposition and lovely person will shortly ensure you a much more permanent establishment, and one more equal to your deserts. As soon as you can, remove from the Castle, it will be no place for innocence like yours: but yet I would not, by any means, you should incense the Marchese; he is not likely to be your friend, but he may be your powerful enemy. Your

manner

manner towards him must be respectful and guarded; and it would give me great satisfaction to know that you would not long remain under a roof where temptations of various kinds will surround you."

She sunk back upon her pillow, as if exhausted by the efforts she had made to talk. Viola was terrified, and threw her arms round to sustain her.

"No, my child, I am not in immediate danger," she feebly cried; and, again raising her head, "a very little more, and then, God! I await thy summons.—I fear, my dear Viola, much, very much, for your youth, your beauty, and your unprotected state; and I tremble when I think to what multiplied distresses they may expose you, in a world where snares

are daily spread for the unwary and unsuspecting. Still I place great reliance on that well-known integrity of character which marked your earliest actions; but remember, Viola, put not too much confidence in it yourself; keep the strictest watch over your own conduct, and be assured Providence will keep watch over *you*. I have no apprehension from the unmasked form of effrontive and glaring vice; but beware of that sophisticated, insinuating villany, which, in the garb of truth, and the disguise of friendship, first intoxicates the senses, and then works its undermining passage to the heart. Abhor erroneous principles, however the language they are cloaked in comes sweet and flowing to the ear; from the man who disseminates them fly, as from a pestilence, he is only plucking a sting from his own bosom,

to

to rankle and corrode within yours; he lulls you to a false security, to awaken you to despair, to perdition. Such men there are,—such an one I think the Monk Zanotti.—I think, my child, I could now rest awhile; retire then to your bed, you have need of repose after all you have gone through, and may good angels guard you!"

VIOLA bent her knees, and, with a heart too full for utterance, embraced the Marchesa, and left the chamber.

CHAP. V.

——"Now dare not I scarce tread to my
own hearing,
Lest echo borrow superstition's tongue;
And seem to answer me, like one departed.
LORD ORFORD.

WHEN Viola left the Marchesa, she listened for some time at the door, to discover if she slept; twice she heard her sigh, but soon convinced that she slumbered, was retiring to her own room, when in the deepened gloom at the end of the long gallery, she again perceived the same dusky form she had before seen; her mind, affected by the late melancholy interview, and deeply impressed by the last words of the Marchesa respecting Zanotti, was particularly

particularly open to the approach of superstition; she tried to speak, but her voice failed her; the domestics were all at rest, except Bianca and Laurentine, who watched in the dressing room of their Lady. Still eager to ascertain the cause of her terror, she strained her eyes to penetrate the obscurity of the apartment; but dimmed with weeping, they almost refused their office, and Viola could only make out sufficiently of the figure to know that it moved and vanished; form or size she could not distinguish; that any human being should obtain entrance at that hour, was out of the question; the servants were all tried and faithful; and even supposing they were not, what inducement could this person have for remaining in the castle, since plunder did not seem to be the object. Wild with conjecture, she

was

was afraid to turn, lest some more appalling appearance should present itself, when she presently heard a low indistinct groan, as of a person in pain, or dying:—at first, she thought it came from the chamber of the Marchesa, a moment's recollection however proved it issued from the great stair-case, which led from the end of the gallery. There are few things so dreadful as the impression of unintelligible sound: Viola was horror-struck—"Perhaps," she cried, shuddering at her own suggestions, "it is the spirit of some murdered parent!—perhaps, horrible idea! the spectre of my hapless mother now hovers near her wretched offspring, to guard the guilty relicks she has left."

"SAVE me! save me!" she cried, covering her face with her hands,—again the groan was repeated; "oh save me!"

me!" shrieked Viola, as, agonized with terror, she rushed into the dressing room, and sunk on the floor.

When Bianca, according to the desire of Viola, had ordered the servants to their respective chambers, she summoned Laurentine, the Marchesa's waiting maid, to her accustomed duty of watching near the bedroom of their Lady, and of guarding her, in her adventurous passage from the servants' hall, through the dark and dreary galleries, for Laurentine had no terrors; she could sleep as soundly in one of the long-evacuated turrets of the building, as in the most habitable part of it; while poor old Bianca, bigotted to all the absurd superstitions of her country's faith, imagined every howling of the wind to be the murmurs of some restless invisible, and

every object, which from her blindness she could not clearly distinguish, to be the perturbed ghosts of her early and ill-fated Lord and Lady, whose memory she never ceased to revere, and whose praises flowed as freshly from her mouth at this period, as they had done on that day, when the noble Albenza led his bride, in all the pride of youth and beauty, to the altar. Laurentine therefore was the stoutest heart in the service of the Marchese di Morano; for men as well as women had listened so frequently to the terrific tales of Bianca, that not one of them ever ventured about after dark, unless in large parties. Bianca had taken care to provide sufficiently of wines and provisions as might serve the exigencies of the night; and she and Laurentine having made a plentiful repast, the latter chose her chair near the

the table, and with her apron thrown over her head, was soon, in spite of wind, weather, and evil spirits, in one of those sound, comfortable slumbers, from which very gentle eloquence could not have awakened her ; not so poor Bianca ; she listened, like Viola, at the door of her mistress's chamber, then looked fearfully around the apartment, and at length, being convinced all was safe, had just placed a large bible before her, thrown her kerchief across her shoulders to repel the night air, and was most deliberately placing the spectacles on her nose, when the pale, trembling form of Viola darted into the room, and for an instant almost deprived the poor old housekeeper of her reason.—"Holy Virgin!" she at last articulated, "what have you seen, Signiora?" raising Viola as well as she could, with her shrunk

shrunk and feeble arms, and placing her on the seat she had just left. "I said the owl did not shriek so for nothing to-night; Laurentine will credit me another time, I hope, when I tell her, that every evening after sunset, the Marchese (my own dear master I mean, Signiora) walks round the castle, and then vanishes at the western porch.—I only wonder some folks rest as well in their beds as they do; but they do not rest always neither.—I warrant the night the Marchese flew in such a whirlwind out of his apartment, he had seen more than he wished to see; but do Signiora take something; mercy on us how pale you look!"

"Good Bianca," said Viola, who, restored from her agitation, had recovered her presence of mind, "you mistake the cause of my terror; what

could I see? Believe me, I know no reason to which I can attribute my fainting, save lowness of spirits, or perhaps being startled at the noise of thunder."

"SANTA Marie!" said Bianca, "how dismally the wind roars; did you not hear a noise, Signiora?" creeping as close as she could to Viola.

HOWEVER Viola wished to appear composed before the servants, she could not reflect upon the mysterious form she had encountered, without shuddering.

"No," she cried, her voice trembling as she spoke, "I heard no noise; and if there were any," (trying to discredit what most she feared), "Laurentine could not sleep as soundly as she does."

"HOLY

"Holy San Marco!" reiterated Bianca, "Laurentine could sleep in purgatory, therefore Signiora don't you comfort yourself in that way; a sound there was, and I remember the very night my Lord the late Marchese died, just as I was stepping into bed, I heard———Jesu Marie!" she cried, devoutly crossing herself, "there's the noise again!"———

Viola caught her arm; "Good Heavens!" she exclaimed, "something certainly moves along the gallery at this minute!"

Bianca, with her rosary in her lap, and her hands crossed upon her bible, did not speak—she could not—terror had deprived her of that great power of articulation, which usually she so amply possessed.

Viola listened; but if the roaring of the blast admitted the least cessation, the loud snoring of Laurentine amply filled up the space; she heard it not again: "It was fancy," she cried, as she raised a glass of water to her lips, "it was fancy, and I have too many real evils, to indulge in imaginary ones."

"Ah Signiora!" said Bianca, shaking her head, drawing her chair still closer, and looking most significantly in Viola's face, "this is the same noise I heard on the night my Lord died; and between ourselves, Signiora Viola, I do not much wonder at it; to be sure, it is not for poor servants to give their opinions about their betters, but I don't care who hears me say, my Lord never came fairly by his end." Viola looked towards her, and saw the

tear

tear stand in either eye at this forcible recollection of her former Lord: "Thou precious drop of honesty and nature," thought Viola, "what art thou not worth? more by worlds than all the forced effusions of affected sensibility, or counterfeited sentiment! thou art the purest flowing of the heart; sainted Bertoldo! it will moisten the floweret around thy tomb, while dry and withered shall grow the noxious weed, to choke thy brother's unlamented grave."—"The Marchese," said Viola, "it is well known, was assassinated on the banks of the Pescara, and consequently"——

"All that," interrupted Bianca, "I know; aye, and much more than you can tell me, Signiora. When I said he did not come fairly by his end, I did not mean only that he was killed by robbers."

An uncommon sensation rushed upon the mind of Viola, as she eagerly demanded of Bianca, to what she alluded?

"San Marco forbid that I should allude to any one, in particular," said Bianca, "but——yet——it was said, that if my dear Lord and Lady had but remained at their castle, without *visitors*, you understand me, Signiora, they might have been there themselves to this day."

"Good Heavens! Bianca," said Viola, "do you know what you are saying; you should be particularly careful how you give credit to reports so injurious to"——

"Reports!" cried Bianca; "truly, Signiora, I do see but little now, but in

in those days I had my eyes about me as sharp as any one, and—but as I said before, it is no business of mine, any farther than that my Lord the Marchese, God rest his soul, was such a man as you would not meet with once in a century! so good, so handsome, and so brave withal; and for my Lady, she was an Angel! Ah!" she continued, the tear again making its appearance, "it was a pity she was so fine a creature; if she had but had the good fortune to have been but plain and homely, some folks would not have coveted their neighbours' goods in the manner they did."

"DID you see her after the death of the Marchese?" asked Voila.

"SEE her, Signiora!" cried the housekeeper,

keeper, closing her bible in no very complacent manner, "they would not let me see her,—no one but Gradisca, the melancholy old soul who now lives in the vale below, was suffered to be near her when she died; she was waiting-woman to the Marchesa."—"Alas!" said Viola, looking affectionately at her, "she must have been a great loss to you; so young to die too, was hard indeed; you would have liked to have been with her in her last moments."

"I WAS—I was"—cried the poor old creature, half suffocated with the remembrance; "when they turned me out of her chamber, I laid me down by the door that shut her from me, and blessed be the Virgin! I think I heard her last sigh."

"AND

"And the poor babe," cried Viola, wiping away her tears," how long did that survive its unhappy mother?"

"Half an hour, but I did not see it; they were both buried together. God rest their souls, for I am sure they are happy. It was much such a night as this I remember, and a fearful one it was. 'Tis true, one ought not to lament the dead; but when I think the body of my dear Lord now sleeps beneath the waters, I envy the poorest man, who lies quietly in the earth; and this I am sure of, his precious soul never will be at peace till his body is quietly laid by the side of my Lady, in christian ground."

"Was the Marchese di Morano affected by his loss?" said Viola, whose

curiosity was raised to a most painful degree, "did he lament him long?"

"YES, Signiora, at the gaming table at Naples, and in such like places, he lamented him, as I heard, and left my poor Lady to pine, and mope alone, for he would not allow her company or diversion, though he knew very well how to enjoy them himself; but, however, that's the way of most husbands now-a-days. "Well," she continued, assuming an air of self-importance, "if my Lord, the Marchese, does at last come to a bad end, its not for want of good advice; for often and often have I warned the Signior Moraldi against keeping bad company when he was a mere boy; and he was always for living with those who were not over scrupulous. They say, Signiora, when he was at Naples," lowering

lowering her tone almost to a whisper, "he associated with a man who dealt with the devil; and he it was who put him up to half his bad pranks."

VIOLA smiled at her simplicity, yet the things she had gathered from the vague and superstitious accounts of Bianca, sunk deep into her mind. "Yes!" she exclaimed, "the Marchesa was in the right, this is no abode for me when she is gone!"

"SAN Marco forbid," cried the old woman, "that it should! you are too sweet a creature to remain here in safety! Ah! Signiora, you are young and innocent, and God grant you may long continue so! for though you are very handsome now, that will not last for ever. Beauty, as Father Jeronimo used to tell me when I was a girl, is a

summer flower, that soon droops and fades away; but goodness, he would say, Bianca, is a strong and sturdy evergreen, and blooms as freshly in a winter's evening as in the fairest morn of spring. Pardon an old woman's prating, Signiora; my own sweet Lady used to let me talk to her as freely as though I had been an equal; and early habits are not easily forgotten."

"PARDON you!" cried Viola, "from whatever source it flows, such excellent counsel must ever remain engraven on my memory; the rivulet that circles round the humble cabin, is oftener clear and grateful to the taste than is the muddy stream that stagnates round the moated high castello."

"I WOULD," thought Viola, "have the inlet to my reason made through my heart;

heart; one will refine the current of the other; and those two powers, which, when divided, cause war and anarchy within the mind, in mutual action shall assist each other, and prove the victors o'er each weaker principle!"

She soon perceived that Bianca had talked herself into an inclination to follow the example of her companion Laurentine; nor was she sorry that a stop was, by this means, put to a conversation she could but ill support, promising to awaken her, if the Marchesa called, she was soon the only conscious being in the castle. Wishing to dissipate reflection, she took a book down from the shelf, opened it, and began to read; it was a volume of Petrarch; but her ideas were wandering, and thought so rapidly succeeded

ceeded thought, that she turned down her page, and taking the lamp, with a step light and fearful, opened the door of the Marchesa's chamber, and approached the bed; her sleep was now easy and undisturbed, and with pleasure she hailed the air of calm serenity diffused over her countenance. Closing the curtains, she again returned, and had recourse to her book; but the soft complainings of the plaintive bard of Vaucluse were too much in unison with her own sensations to be read with tranquillity. Viola was, at this period, most unwilling to enter on a retrospect, or rather into an inquisition of her feelings, for various and many reasons, reasons which, as she could not justify to her understanding, she was afraid to investigate. From the hour that she had learnt the mysterious manner of her entrance into

into the Albenza family, she had conceived a hope that, one day or another, the cloud that hung over her might be dispersed; not that her friend had ever given her reason to harbour such an idea, on the contrary, had always discouraged it; but to a mind young, sanguine, and romantic, where are the schemes and expectations too visionary not to be indulged? At this moment the confession of the Marchesa had destroyed, for ever, her airy fabric of anticipated happiness; and stoical, indeed, must be that nature which can survey the downfal of its dearest wishes without the keenest anguish and disappointment. It is true she had always feared dishonour was attached to her origin, and she feared it from the principle of an ingenuous disposition, for that mystery attended it; "and there are few instances,"

argued

argued Viola, "where right needs the cloak of concealment as its protection; 'tis guilt alone that sculks in hiding-places, and walks benighted under the mid-day sun." Rectitude stands forth, stubborn as the rock; the winds may buffet, and the wave assail it, but still it rears its point, firmly to meet that heaven whose strength it bears; and strong, beneath the tempests that surround it, in scorn surveys the malice of the element, and stands erect a bulwark raised by Providence. In despair she now beheld each cherished vision flitting from her view, felt hope was dead within her bosom; for, had she not bound herself solemnly and irrevocably to consume each record of her parents' fate? had she not been told death would follow the knowledge of it? She was, too, about to leave for ever the scene of her earliest youth, endeared

endeared to her by ties sweet, though now painful to recollection; for ever! What a thought is that! Even indifferent objects, under the conviction that we see them for the last time, become interesting, and are of consequence. She acknowledged that duty, propriety, enforced the measure; but the acknowledgment drew tears of such bitterness from her eyes, as those who are on the eve of losing, eternally, a beloved and "sacred home," alone can understand. It is true "the world was all before" her; but it was as a dreary and barren heath, over which she was to traverse a forlorn and isolated wanderer, without a guide, without one hospitable roof to shelter under, or one faint glimmering of light to cheer her dark and solitary way. 'Tis a beaten track, and many a deserving traveller has trodden it; but none under circumstances

stances so peculiarly inauspicious as those of a young and destitute woman. All men have a centre, most find ample recompence for their toils; but the goal of *her* destiny is dependence, dependence on the precariousness of health, on the uncertainty of talents, on the tyrannical caprices of pampered individuals! She bears the gripe of poverty, beneath the scourge of pride; she feels necessity freezing the tide of liberal sentiment; she bends to those she despises; she dwells with those she must condemn.

"An alien on the face of nature!" cried Viola; "wherefore do I exist? Wherefore but to nourish within my bosom an inmate destructive to my repose, a pent-up flame, that will consume my peace for ever!" Her tears now flowed fast; for the unchecked sensibility

sensibility of the poet had but too effectually called forth all her own. Alas! Viola loved with all the fervour and agony of an hopeless affection, the son of the Marchesa, the last and sole heir of the Albenzi; a family who would have preferred the extirpation of their high nobility from off the earth, rather than consent to an alliance with one beneath them. It was now two years since she had seen the young Albenza; but two years could not obliterate his image from Viola's heart: at that period he had been for some time resident at the castle,—lively, handsome, of the most refined manners, and enlarged understanding,—he was formed to please, and he succeeded. To say that he had lived under the same roof with so fair a being as Viola di Benincasor, and felt indifferent to her attractions, would not

be

be true:—by nature tender and susceptible, he possessed great and superior virtues; and for his failings, they were those of an ingenuous and elevated mind; he was proud, impetuous, and romantic; he reconciled the attentions he had paid to Viola under the common idea, that gallantry demanded, and custom sanctioned them; but they were, in reality, too much in unison with his own feelings, to be quite disinterested, and he soon discovered his own peace was caught in the snare, which youthful vanity had, at first, spread for another. With this conviction, however, came also the determination to crush this infant passion in its growth, and to fly a place it was daily becoming more dangerous for him to remain in; for, that he could unite himself to a woman of obscure birth, was a possibility

he

he did not dare to admit: he felt, as the last of his house, it was unjust, it was unwarrantable; and to make a dishonourable proposal to the being, to whom the first pure offerings of his love had been paid, was an idea he recoiled from. Like others, Albenza was subject to the frailties and infirmities of human nature, but his heart was untainted with vice: he had shuddered at its influence over his father's character, and sedulously avoided granting it an empire over his own: and to entail ruin, misery, and disgrace on an innocent girl, merely because he thought himself master of her affections, he considered as a crime of the blackest dye. "Yes, I will fly from her," he cried, "fly from the only woman I can ever sincerely love: Hard tax of greatness! it is thus we pay thee tribute, by the sacrifice of

the heart's best gratifications." He did so; and, as the old housekeeper had asserted, his last receding look was bent on Viola, his last ejaculation was a mental prayer for her safety and welfare. He did not, however, find forgetfulness as easily attained as he had hoped; for, in the midst of pleasure, in the circles of gaiety and fashion, in parties where every allurement of youth and beauty were displayed to attract him, the modest form, the retiring manners, the sweet soothing voice of Viola was ever present to his fancy, and formed so striking a contrast to the bold and artificial women of the world who fluttered round him, that distracted by a thousand emotions, alternately the slave of love, of regret, and mortification, he would return to the solitude of his own villa, and there, unheard, unseen by all, give utterance to a tenderness,

which

which could it but have reached the ear of Viola, would have more than repaid her for years of anguish and suffering. During his stay at Naples, he seldom saw the Marchese; for Morano had no natural affections, and Albenza, though scrupulous in obedience to parental duty, and with the highest notions of filial reverence, could not entertain regard towards the man he could neither respect nor esteem; besides, he felt his mother's injuries, and, as such, saw the Marchese in no very favourable point of view; while in possessing a son so eminently gifted by nature, *he* found little satisfaction, but as it administered to the ruling passions of his mind, which were vanity and ambition: he knew not the fond feelings of an anxious father; his were the arrogant sentiments of an haughty tyrant, who viewed

viewed in *him* the means by which his own grandeur and consequence were to be transmitted to posterity, and from that cause alone was he of importance to him. Large as were his possessions, and inexhaustible as appeared his resources, so unbounded had been his profuseness and extravagance, that he trembled as the time drew nigh, when his son's coming of age would oblige him to render up an account of that part of his wife's property which was to devolve to him; but which was so encumbered, that he saw no probable means of extricating himself from the effects of his prodigality, but by some desperate effort, which, as his last hope, he was now determined to make. Caution was, however, necessary; and his first step was to prevent Albenza's gaining access to his mother in her last moments; for he knew she was well

well acquainted with the state of his affairs, and would consider it an act of duty, to warn her son against the danger which threatened him. Having settled this plan, he wrote to Albenza a letter, which, for art and subtlety, would have shamed the most finished scholar of the Machiavelian school. He lamented the differences that so long had existed between the Marchesa and himself; confessed that his own conduct had been erroneous; expressed a wish to retrieve the past, by every reparation in his power; and at last, after veering through all the intricacies of evasive language, he came to the point, which was, a determination that Albenza should espouse a Lady, fixed on by him, as a suitable and proper match; concluding with assuring him, it was the mutual wish of both parents; and not doubting,

but in *his* union, their own would be for ever cemented. The Lady, he informed him, was his equal, handsome, and possessing every accomplishment. More particularly, he dwelt on the probability that this marriage would prove the means of his living for the future on good terms with the Marchesa. He knew the vulnerable part of Albenza's character, was to delight in being able to benefit others: and he had frequently ventured to reason with his father on this subject; he revered and loved his mother; he saw she had been unequally matched; but he knew likewise the fetters by which she was bound, were not to be unforged, and therefore thought it infinitely more respectable in the eyes of the world, that she should appear to bear them lightly: in public, he was her champion; in private,

private, her friend, her consolation, and support.

We have before said the Marchese would have experienced the utmost satisfaction, could he, by any fault discovered in his wife's conduct, have found an apology for his own; in this, however, he was foiled, and consequently could only have recourse to the fabrication of ill natured reports, to sully the reputation, and destroy the peace of her unblemished life. Albenza, more than once, had detected the propagator of these infamous calumnies; and while he laid the reptile-tool of their circulation at his feet, his soul sunk under the mortification of being the son of such a father. He read the epistle twice over; but if the contents surprised him, the style in which they were couched, astonished

him still more. He had not heard from his mother on this business, was the first idea that occurred to him: he had hitherto only been used to threats, or commands, from the Marchese; and that he should now address him in the language of persuasion, and consent to reason, and suggest motives for his actions, convinced him more was "meant than met the ear," and that his father must have an adviser. "Good God!" he exclaimed, "can I have betrayed to others a weakness I have scarcely dared acknowledge to myself? Impossible!—Marry!—that I can never do:—Was it not enough, that I burst every bond of inclination as a sacrifice to duty, but that I must now slavishly submit to the rigorous enforcements of an arbitrary parent? Parent! I disclaim the name, where tyranny assumes it: Shall I, a being

equally

equally endowed with reason as my father, forget the province that I owe myself—and shall I not only bring myself into wretchedness, but draw down misery on another's head, by plighting vows my heart can never sanction? no—never will I yield to coercion: and sure, if there is a curse more heavy than another, 'tis that inflicted by parental despotism." His thoughts now recurred to the Marchesa: two months had elapsed since he had last heard from her, and then she was much out of health; the several letters he had written, had never been answered, and he was now more than ever at a loss to account for a silence, as perplexing as it was extraordinary. Of Viola he was entirely ignorant; for he felt too conscious ever to mention her to his mother; and though he would have given much for

tidings concerning her, he had not courage to seek them. In this state, he sat down to address his father; but after several letters written, and as many destroyed, he determined to give up the intention, and the next day to seek an interview with him; a perusal of what he had said, convincing him that his sentiments were much more likely to call forth the irritability of his father's character, than to soften him in his favour. After a night passed in sleepless agitation and disquietude, he arose early, to reach the Morano palace ere the morning levee of the Marchese had assembled. He found his father risen, and in his dressing-room; an air of unusual complacency was visible on his countenance, as stretching forth his hand, he offered it with a smile to his son; Albenza bowed coldly, but respectfully, for to

wear

wear a manner foreign to his feelings, was a subterfuge he despised.

"I HAVE attended you, my Lord," he cried, "in person, to reply to the letter with which you yesterday honoured me; to assure you, in one word, that marriage is a consideration I am by no means prepared to answer; and that I rely on your generosity, and your affection as a parent, to wave (at least for the present) a plan, which I fear it will not be in my power to agree to, and which militates in every respect against my own wishes, and ideas of happiness.

"ALBENZA," said the Marchese, whose brow had been gradually lowering during the whole of this speech, "I am not prepared to meet disobedience, or headstrong determination—

could I justify the proceeding to the dignity of my own character, I would prove how much more I have considered *your* welfare in this alliance, than any good arising to *me*, from your marriage with the daughter of the Conte di Montebino. I feel it equally superfluous, and unnecessary, for me to enter on a history of those grievances which have for long subsisted between your mother and myself, any further than to assure you, on my part, that I think it now rests with you, by compliance with our mutual wishes, to effect a reconciliation, I am to believe you have long desired."

"My Lord," replied Albenza, "how much I have desired it, I regret you have so long forgotten, or rather, that you only remember it as a stimulus to plunge me into that same gulf

gulf which has swallowed up your reputation and my mother's happiness. Interest, my Lord, was the basis on which your union was founded; how has it terminated? in your disgrace, in my mother's misery: you cannot, then, wonder I seek to avoid that rock against which my parent's bark so early foundered, or that I should wish to profit by an example which so nearly affects my own situation."

"Boy," said the Marchese, "from whose example have you learnt to cavil on the system of your father's conduct? who has instructed you to thwart that will, which, while I live, shall be the law of your actions? or——or"——his voice trembling with passion, "the day that sees you disregard it, shall see your ruin and estrangement from that

house which will never acknowledge its corrupt or degenerate offspring!"

"My family, my Lord, can never be disgraced by one, who scorns to disgrace himself! Why, oh my father! should I marry? My years are not so many, but that I may hereafter find the chosen of my heart to be the approved of yours." Albenza stopped, for the inward monitor of his bosom told him that could never be the case. "Suffer me," he continued, "after I have paid a visit to my mother, to proceed farther on my travels, and on my return, you, perhaps, may have revoked your severe intention; or I may have acquired more submission to comply with it."

"Albenza," said the Marchese, "mark me—I should be sorry to suppose

pose your stubborn rejection of my suit arises from the indulgence of any grovelling or misplaced attachment to one beneath you: hear me, presumptuous boy!" (for Albenza here made an effort to speak,) "by Heaven! could I think you capable of harbouring a thought so injurious to the honour of my name, I would disclaim and abandon you! while my curse, the direst one a father's maledictive vengeance could entail, should follow you through the world!"

ALBENZA was shocked, and wounded to the soul by these words of his father: "Good God!" he exclaimed, "am I to bear the heavy judgment of a parent's curse, or go a willing victim to immolate each privilege of my nature! Oh, my father! would that I could turn your thoughts into yourself, and teach

you feeling for your child! then would I ask, is it a crime to love sense, beauty, virtue, though clad in native lowliness? Your pardon, my Lord, but I would then remind you, when our house's boast, the generous Bertoldo, raised a fair lily from its humble vale, to bloom and shed its sweetness o'er a richer soil." He turned, and looked towards his father, but was horror-struck at the expression of his countenance; his lip was quivering, his eye darted fire; his face pale, ghastly, and livid: "Villain!" he vociferated, "is it thus you dare reproach me?—Bertoldo!——what have I to do with him——or what have you?—his example was a bad one; and his untimely end will prove to you"———

"That treachery, my Lord," interrupted Albenza, "strikes at the best of

of men; and like a pestilence doth spread around, nor spares nor vice nor virtue"——

"TREACHERY!" reiterated the Marchese, pacing the room in furious agitation, "begone! wretched boy, and avoid my presence!—thou art as a basilisk to my sight! but remember—remember!" he cried, his words suffocated, "I am resolute, I *will* be obeyed!" The cause of your obstinate disobedience I suspect; and if I prove your mother's base-born minion to be the barrier, tremble, young man, at my vengeance!" Saying this, he darted violently out of the apartment, leaving Albenza torpid with wonder and despair.

IN a few minutes, however, he was awakened from his reverie by the entrance

trance of a servant, who, placing a note on the table, closed the door, and withdrew. It was from his father; the purport, to command his attendance on him that night at the Conte di Montebino's assembly, under pain of his lasting displeasure. When Albenza read the letter, his first impulse was again to seek his father, and resolutely to refuse his compliance; but reflection told him, moderation was oftener successful, than violence or opposition, and it ended, therefore, in a determination to comply with his desire. Having given this message, he left the palace, and proceeding to his own villa on the bay, revolved over every part of the late conversation. He had now no longer a doubt but that his father, by some means or another, had gained a knowledge of his affection, and he shuddered to what destruction it might expose

expose the unoffending, innocent Viola, whose only crime was in being but too lovely and too amiable. Who could be the Marchese's informant on this subject, he was at some loss to conjecture; he had never breathed his passion to any one; but among various suggestions, the possibility that it might be the Father Zanotti, shot across his mind. He was his father's Confessor, his constant companion when at Morano; and he now suspected him of being his counsellor and abettor: yet why this should be, he could in no way account; he had but a circumscribed knowledge of the character of Zanotti, for never having particularly liked his manners, he had held little intercourse with him: the remarks, however, he had made in that little, were just and true; he saw he possessed uncommon brilliancy of talent, great

pene-

penetration, and vigour of mind; but that he was designing and reserved, proud and inaccessible: yet still, allowing all this, he saw no reason, to reconcile the idea of his exercising those powers over one who had never injured, and who could in no way interest or concern him. These meditations lasted till he arrived at his villa, where he threw himself into a chair, and endeavoured, by the exercise of his reason, to argue himself into composure and peace; still, however, he could think only of Viola; for in the true spirit of human contradiction, resistance had but increased the warmth of his sentiments; and in the thought that she was for ever to be torn from him, she became dearer, and more tenderly beloved: his repast was served up, but Albenza could not eat; peevishly he turned from the lattice, for his

eye

eye sickened at the fair prospect it presented: alas! every thing around was tinged with the dark colours of his own imagination; and the gnawing conviction at his heart, warned him that happiness had for ever fled his once tranquil and contented bosom.

"That I must die, it is my only comfort,
Death is the privilege of human nature;
And life without it, were not worth the taking."

Rowe.

The expiration of three weary hours still found the desponding Viola wrapt in pensive meditation, indulging hopeless regrets, or romantic wishes for the welfare of him she loved, in forming excellent resolutions, or laying down hard philosophic rules for her future guidance and direction. The grey of morning was now faintly breaking through the lattice, but not as usually tinged

tinged with the lustre of the rising sun; the sky was black and lowering; the tempest of the night seemed scarcely yet dispersed, and all nature wore an aspect of gloom and heaviness; Viola, as was ever her wonted custom, approached the window, and welcomed the return of day in her matin to the Virgin; her prayer was long, and fervent, for she supplicated a blessing upon all her fellow-creatures, humbly besought the Ruler over all things to be her protector, for peace and comfort to her maternal benefactress, for resignation to bear the ills and cares of life; and lastly, for strength and forbearance to resist its temptations. She found her mind much tranquilized by this appeal; her determination formed, and her courage renovated and assured, she raised her eyes to Heaven in gratitude for its mercies, and was rising from

from her knees, when a noise in the adjoining room startled her: she paused a few moments, and then distinctly heard a groan issue from the bed chamber; in an instant she darted to it, and found her friend apparently in the agonies of death: scarce knowing what she did, she flew to Bianca, and in a scream of terror, aroused her from her slumbers. "Fly!" cried Viola, "oh send immediately for the physician—— your Lady is dying"———

The poor frightened old woman, though hardly sensible, did immediately as she was commanded, while Laurentine followed Viola to the Marchesa: she was almost speechless; cold damps hung upon her forehead; her eyes were sunk, and dim, and there did not seem the most distant probability of her living another hour.

"Alas!"

"Alas!" cried Viola, "what will become of me? Let me send for the Confessor——for any one!"

The Marchesa emphatically shook her head, and feebly exclaimed, "Oh no, no! not Zanotti!"

"The Marchese," exclaimed the distracted Viola, "the Signior, why are they not here?"

"Too late, too late," murmured the poor sufferer; "it is too late."

She gazed around her with a vacant insensible stare, at the same time making violent efforts to speak. "I do not wish now," she at last articulated, "to see any one; I feel myself dying, and would be at peace." These last words were spoken in broken and interrupted

interrupted sentences. " You have given your sacred word, my Viola, to fulfil my last injunction; remember and be faithful to your promise. I sink into eternity, as into a quiet sleep, where sorrow is forgotten, and where disquietude for ever reposes. God protect and bless you: be good, and you will be happy." Viola attempted to speak, but words were denied her.

" PARDON, oh Heaven!" she proceeded, " *my* transgressions, as I forgive those of my enemies, and forgive the sins of my husband, as I forgive *him*. Farewel, Viola! a long, a last farewel! Bear to my boy the prayers and blessing of his mother, and tell him sometimes to remember *her* who never ceased to think of him.—Oh life!" she cried, a celestial smile irradiating her dying countenance, " where is thy value?

value? Oh death! where are thy terrors? Bless, bless you all!—remember——" then sinking on the bosom of the deserted Viola, her quiet soul winged its pure flight to the realms of joy and immortality!

Such was the end of a woman whose whole life had been one continued series of sorrow and privation; privations she had borne without a murmur, and sorrows she had supported without a complaint; under misfortunes, where the generality of minds would have been too much occupied by the contemplation of their own calamities, to have considered those of others, she was mindful of all; a general friend, an universal mother, with her the injured ever found redress, the deserted gained protection; sympathising, benevolent, and liberal, she had ever a tear for the unfortunate,

a smile for the prosperous and deserving; above the frailties, and superior to the common weaknesses of her sex, she pitied without arrogance, reproved without severity; and the erring wanderer her reason would have condemned, found an advocate in the tenderness of her nature, an example in the propriety of her conduct: she was just, but not rigid; religious, without bigotry; quick, but not violent; determined, though not obstinate; her principles were fixed, her faith immoveable, and her morality sincere. Yet this admirable being, so immutable are the ways of Providence, was the victim of successful villainy! a sacrifice to tyranny and injustice! Why this should be—why "power is not to men of skill, nor riches to those of understanding," is far beyond the compass of our finite comprehensions:

blest,

blest, therefore, is the man who receives, with equal gratitude, his portion of sweets and bitterness, (hard lesson to practise!) who raises the cup to his lips, under the strong conviction that they are alike salutary and efficacious.

Viola sunk on the body of her benefactress, in a state to which language can do but little justice, for insensibility, the last friend of the wretched and bereaved sufferer, visited her not; she clasped the cold remains to her bosom; she gazed wildly on her pallid features; she called loudly on her name.

"Art thou indeed gone!" she cried; "for ever fled from the hapless creature who now lives but to desolation and misery! Oh cheerless children

dren of penury and want! whither will ye now fly for succour? Return to sorrow and distress; that hand which used to raise your drooping heads, no more shall raise itself; those eyes which used so soft to beam upon ye, never shall open more!"

"Signiora Viola," said Laurentine, who sat at the bottom of the bed, with the tears gushing from her eyes in torrents, "pray don't take on so, it breaks my heart to see you; to be sure my dear Lady never can return, but yet this is but what we must all come to one day or another; death spares neither rich nor poor, old nor young; he feeds upon the best of us."

"Alas!" cried Viola, "how indiscriminate, does it not appear? I am left

to waste in apathy and discontent that life, which, had it but been hers, would have benefited mankind. But, oh Heaven! let me not arraign thy decrees, they are wise, they are omnipotent!"

"Thou art well corrected, daughter, in thyself," said Zanotti, who now slowly entered the apartment, "and therefore have redeemed the penance I otherwise must have imposed on thy impiety!——Peace be to this chamber," he cried, devoutly crossing himself, and kneeling by the side of the corpse, "and to the soul of the departed"———. Bianca now, with the rest of the servants, entered the apartment, and all joined in the service. His address was long and impressive, and so exquisitely beautiful was the language, so noble, so sublime the sentiments

sentiments it breathed, that Viola, buried as she was in grief, could not forbear raising her eyes to the Deliverer. As she did this, the last words of the Marchesa rushed to her memory—" such a man I think the Monk Zanotti," and she involuntarily shuddered. For a moment his glance met hers, but as momentarily he dropt it on his book, while his strong expressive countenance evinced a feeling of anger and constraint. The ceremony at an end, the weeping train departed to their respective occupations, excepting those whose task it was to perform the last melancholy duties to their late Lady. Zanotti took the hand of Viola, and led her into the anti-room: the excessive keenness of her feelings had now somewhat subsided; meek and unresisting, she followed the priest in silence, and,

leaning against a table, covered her face with her handkerchief, and wept bitterly, while Zanotti paced the chamber, apparently buried in his own ruminations, and totally regardless of the interesting being, whose forlorn and isolated situation might have drawn pity and commiseration from the hardest heart.

"I THINK, holy father," she at length said, modestly and timidly addressing him, "that an express ought to be forwarded immediately to the Marchese, with an account of this sad event."

"I HAVE heard from the Marchese," he replied; "they will be here shortly; in the mean time, daughter, endeavour to conquer these violent effusions of a weak and unavailing regret

gret for one, whom not all your sighs and tears can ever recall: rather rejoice that, since it has pleased Heaven to lop a member from this illustrious trunk, in mercy, it has struck at its feeblest and most superfluous branch;" he drew his cowl over his face, and then quitted the apartment, leaving Viola alone to brood and meditate on her sorrows. The last words of the Monk had developed something of his character; her dislike increased towards him, and there was an irresistible awe with which he inspired her, that precluded all comfort in his society, and filled her with uneasiness and dismay. The energies of Viola's character, though long dormant, for want of occasion to call them forth, now seemed suddenly to expand and gather strength; as she felt, with all the propriety inherent in her disposition,

that she should better testify her affection towards her lamented friend by a strict adherence to her last wishes and commands, than suffering her mind to sink under the enervation of useless and unavailing lamentations. Under all circumstances, she had looked towards Providence as to a great and universal guardian, and as such, she now besought him to be *her* consolation and support, to teach her to bear adversity with fortitude, and in all things to place her reliance on him. This done, she rang the bell, and requested to speak to Bianca, who soon after obeyed her summons.

"SANTA Marie!" she cried, "Signiora, what a change is here! In truth, it rives my very heart to see the poor souls below stairs; I declare, ever since the breath has left my dear Lady's

Lady's body, I have had enough to do to distribute cordials for the support of their drooping spirits."

"I WISH, good Bianca," replied Viola, half smiling through her tears, "you could administer any cordial that would raise mine."

"HOLY San Marco! that I will do most readily," replied the honest old creature, taking her in the literal sense; "if you will but step down stairs now into the little saloon, where I have served you a small repast, you shall have a glass of the best Florence in the Marchese's cellar, for all Bernardo is so cross and stingy, forsooth!"

"I DID not mean that kind of cordial, Bianca," said Viola, again smiling at the simplicity of the house-

keeper; "but as I am, indeed, faint and exhausted, I will accept your offer, after I have consulted with you on the means of executing one of my dear benefactress's last directions, for it is you who must assist me in performing it. As I am particularly situated now," she added, with a deep sigh, "I would rather not enter her apartment again myself, till the arrival of the Marchese."

"You are right, Signiora; in this world we cannot be too cautious. So thinks the Abbate, I suppose; for, by the Spirito Santo, he has taken away the key of my Lady's chamber, that no one may enter it till the evening, when Father Jerome is to say mass over the body."

"Good Heaven, Bianca!" said Viola,

Viola, "what an extraordinary measure!—has Father Zanotti then so much authority in the castle?"

"I KNOW not what authority he has a right to, Signiora, I only know what he takes," replied the old servant; "and though I say it, who should not say it, I am as good a Catholic as ever entered the pale of the church, yet, since Father Zanotti has *had* such power in the castle, I begin to think Laurentine not quite so wicked; when she says 'a meddling priest makes every man's house too hot to hold its master.'"

"HUSH, Bianca!" said Viola; your revered Lady never would have suffered one such reflection on any member of our holy religion."

"Well, well, Signiora, I've done; poor folks must see all, and say nothing. Rest my dear Lady's soul, she is an angel, and its not for me to think I can be as good as she was.—Ah! I wonder," she cried, wiping the tears from off her spectacles, "what will now become of poor Gradisca?"

Viola, who remembered to have heard that this Gradisca had formerly been the attendant of Antonia, the wife of Bertoldo, demanded, with some interest, "where she dwelt?"

The old housekeeper, however, who observed, with much concern, the paleness of her cheek and the langour of her whole frame, refused to answer any further interrogations, unless she would accompany her immediately to the saloon; observing, "she ought not

not to sit moping in a place where every thing served to bring her recent loss unceasingly before her eyes."—Viola, ever rational and resigned, thanked her for her zeal and attention; and, leaning on her arm for support, reached the saloon in melancholy silence.

CHAP. VI.

"There, at the foot of yonder nodding beech,
That writhes its odd fantastic root so high,
His listless length at noon-tide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that bubbles by.

Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
Muttering his wayward fancies he would rove,
Now drooping woeful wan, like one forlorn,
Or craz'd with care, or cross'd in hopeless love."

GRAY.

WHEN Viola entered the saloon, all her acquired fortitude forsook her: for the attendant, in the well-meant officiousness of providing her refreshment, had unthinkingly spread it in the place most likely to call forth the keenest

keenest of her feelings. This room, which opened upon the lawn, had been the favourite of the deceased Marchesa; it was here they had occupied themselves with books, or work, after the heat of the day, and blest in the society of each other, looked down upon the tumultuous pleasures of the world as trifling and inefficient. To this enchanting spot, it had been one of her principal amusements, to collect all the various embellishments of nature and of art; on one side it was covered with the choicest paintings; between pannels, where brackets, bearing flowers, shed their sweetness, were the largest Venetian mirrors, elegantly decorated shelves contained each eminent production of ancient and modern literature; small sofas were ranged in uniformity round the apartment; a tasteful drapery, of the palest green taffety,

taffety, cast a cool and tranquil shade over the whole, while the richest shrubs, with many rare exotics of distant climes, filled each vacant space, diffusing fragrance and perfume. Here, at early dawn, Viola had been wont to prune away the rich exuberance of the jessamine and woodbine, as their luxuriant tendrils broke through the treillage into the interior: here, had she distributed her welcome nourishment to the feathered harmonists who nestled in their foliage, or tended the lovely plants that blossomed beneath her care, then touched her lute in praises to the Virgin, and hailed the Marchesa's entrance to their morning repast with filial smiles of tenderness and gratitude; in refined and industrious pursuits they there spent their morning; Viola would read, while the Marchesa made cloathing for the children of the indigent tenantry,

tenantry, or take her pencil, and sketch some newly discovered beauty in the surrounding scenery: in the evening she would join in the rustic fête of the peasants on the lawn, and glide along the dance with all the grace and lightness of a fabled nymph; every one loved, every one admired her; innocent and chearful, delighted, and delighting all, she sunk into tranquillity and repose, she arose to joy and gladness: "Painful reverse!" she exclaimed, as her eye lingered on each memento of her departed friend, "how shall I support thee?" With patience and propriety, whispered the pride of sense and understanding; and Viola obeyed its dictates. In a few minutes, Bianca re-entered the room, with a face bearing strong symptoms of wrath and discomposure. "There, Signiora!" she cried, placing a flask, with no small

small violence, on the table, "there's the Florence! I bore it off, 'spite of that cross-grained Bernardo, who told me to touch it at my peril: *I*, forsooth! who have lived more years in this family than he is old; and to be dared by such a mushroom upstart as that! There, Signiora, pouring out a glass, and presenting it, with a curtsey, to Viola, much good may it do you; God knows, your wants are few enough, for you to be thus grudged a trumpery"——

"GOOD Bianca, interrupted Viola, "I thank you most sincerely for your kindness to me; but I grieve you should have engaged in a quarrel on my account, particularly with so captious a being as Bernardo."

"I WONDER he's not ashamed of

himself," replied Bianca, " to say the disrespectful things he does of his betters: why, Signiora, he declares, that as for you, you are no higher than one of us servants; nay, for that matter, not as good, for that you are only kept upon charity, and will be sent packing, as soon as my Lord comes: and for my Lady, I declare it chokes me to repeat it—he says her fondness for you was not altogether so disinterested; and hints, wicked wretch that he is! that she was no better than she should be——Holy San Marco! how pale you look, Signiora"——

Poor Viola, during this recital, had indeed felt her heart sink within her; the calumnies of a being so vile and contemptible as this, had they been directed to herself alone, would not have affected her, but when levelled at

at the sacred memory of her beloved protectress, and on her account too, raised in her bosom such keen and bitter sensations, as required all her forbearance and strength of mind to support.

"My worthy friend," she at length said, the glow of conscious integrity crimsoning her whole countenance; "I trust in a life of honest industry, to be able to prove how much superior goodness is to greatness; and for the despicable insinuations aimed at the spotless character of your now-sainted mistress, I can only say, I fear they spring from a source, whose delight it is, to bring others to the debasement of their own level"—

Bianca looked at her stedfastly; "that was said," she at last exclaimed,

ed, " just as my own sweet Lady would have spoken ! Heaven keep thee, Signiora ! Go where thou wilt, God's blessing will follow thee—and belong to who you may, you are an ornament and a treasure." Viola pressed her hand in silence.

Bianca now besought her to taste some of the delicacies she had placed before her; this, Viola at last complied with, for she was faint and much exhausted. During her moderate repast, she informed Bianca, it was her wish to obtain the Marchesa's writing-desk from out the dressing-room, which, for many reasons, she did not like to enter herself, till the arrival of the Marchese; she therefore requested her to seek it, when the apartment was next opened for the admittance of Father Jerome; to this the good woman promised

promised a ready acquiescence, observing, at the same time, "that she had as great a right to enter any room in that castle, as the best priest in the Pope's dominions." Viola now begged she would tell her which was the cottage of Gradisca, saying she felt "much interested in her, as she had heard, though extremely poor, she entirely supported a young man, the son of a dead sister, who was an idiot."

Bianca, drawing her to the viranda, pointed out the exact spot at the bottom of the valley where it was situated; adding, "if she then kept to her right, she could not fail to know it, by the wretched and gloomy appearance—and believe me, Signiora, it does not look half so bad on the outside, as within, either.

For

For my part," she continued, "I've always fancied there was more in her history than is known to every one, she is such a melancholy, moping creature: to be sure, she has enough to make her so, if it is only living with poor Lorenzo, who has never been in his right senses since he was a boy of eleven years old."

"Was his derangement occasioned by any accident?" asked Viola.

"Yes, Signiora," replied the old woman; "he fell, when playing with some other children, from off the point of yonder cliff there, and received a contusion in his skull, which has ever since affected his brain."

"Did she never apply at the castle for assistance?" said Viola, "surely the Marchese

Marchese would have afforded her some relief."

"YES, Signiora, she has applied very often; but you know, it is not always ask, and have; though, to be sure, my Lady was a good friend to them while she lived; and, I have often thought, pinched herself, that she might give to others—I warrant Gradisca is but badly off by this time."

"How, then, does she pay the rent of her cottage," asked Viola, "if she is so very poor as you represent her?"

"SHE has that given her by my Lord," answered the housekeeper, "who offered, also, to get her nephew into some place at Naples, where they receive lunatics; but Gradisca said she would rather starve, than send him there;

there; and with this the Marchese was very much enraged, and declared he would turn her out of the cottage, for her obstinate pride, as he called it, for he would have no useless vagabonds on his lands: and since that time, Signiora, which is now nearly two years, I verily believe they would have starved, if it had not been for the Marchesa."

"I WILL go to the cottage this evening," said Viola, musing, "perhaps these wretched creatures may be in want of common necessaries." Bianca now informed her that Gradisca had for some time past gained a small pittance by making nets for the villagers; but that lately she had lost the use of her arm, and had been obliged to give up her employment: "Yet, however," she added, "there are still feeling hearts to

to be found among the peasants of the valley, which are not always given to their betters; for most, as they leave the vintage at noon, call in with something comforting for poor Lorenzo—who is as harmless as a lamb. I take my mite too, sometimes; and though it is but little, 'tis given with a hearty good will, and that is more than all can say."

"It gaineth thee a creditor in Heaven, Bianca!" cried Viola enthusiastically, "and with interest will it be repaid thee there"——

Oh, ye bestowers of ostentatious charity! whose names swell public chronicles, because ye give a drop from out the ocean of your treasures; ye have rewards on earth, in servile flatteries, and laboured eulogies; but the humble peasant,

peasant, who spares one crust from out his narrow scrip, to feed the famished child of poverty, whose silent tear falls on the withered hand that is raised to grasp it, unwitnessed, unrecorded, receives it from his God!"—Her meal being concluded, she yielded to the solicitations of Bianca, and sought for an hour that repose she had not tasted for the last three nights; the housekeeper therefore concluded the conversation by telling her, "she had been ordered to prepare all things for the reception of the Marchese and his son," and then quitted the room. Harrassed in mind and body, Viola endeavoured to court a respite from her cares in sleep; but alas! it is the friend of prosperity, and ever flies the couch of anguish and misfortune: long was it ere it answered to her summons, and even then, ever restless fancy was

awake, and in her dreams each evil was augmented; in one of these, she started from her pillow, and was surprised to perceive the shade of evening approaching, and to find the air already cool and refreshing. She hastily pulled the bell, and again giving a charge to Bianca, not to fail securing the writing-desk, wrapt her veil around her and proceeded to the valley. As she walked, the calm serenity of the scene, the slow chiming of the Convent bell, the evening carol of the shepherd, as he drove his flocks out of the meadow, and the distant murmur of the cataract rushing down the rocks, diffused that kind of pensive pleasure over her, which only souls of delicacy and refinement can experience or appreciate: it was now she enjoyed the melancholy delight of gazing on each object of past felicity; of recalling each word, look, action,

action, of those who had inspired it. Passing on till she reached a small recess, covered with ivy, and hewn out of the rock, she faultered, overcome by recollection; for here, after sun-set, the Marchesa, Albenza, and herself, had used to bend their steps, and spend in social converse their evening, till darkness spread its mantle around them; here, too, they had little concerts; and while the soft cadence of their plaintive trios swelled the gale, Viola thought that love and happiness would last for ever; nor knew, unconscious being as she was, that the barb of disappointed affection rankles like poisoned venom in the heart, never to be extracted.

"ALBENZA!" she exclaimed, her eye still rivetted to the spot, "once to have held a place within thy bosom,

was my youth's fond ambition; but I've since known too well the pangs an anxious lover feels, to wish such pangs were thine. Witness Heaven! thy wealth, thy dignities, to me were dross; for I have often wished thou hadst been a peasant, I a princess, and when I bade adieu, and left, in fancy, my stately palace, to dwell with thee beneath a lowly cabin, if, as I prest my head upon the rushes, perchance a thought of greatness would intrude, and paint the downy pillow I had left, then I would think, when, at the close of day, I drest our little cot for thy return, how I had trimmed our board to meet thy liking, or strained my sight to greet thy welcomed presence, then, when thy beaming eye rushed on my fancy, thy outstretched arms, thy looks of gratitude and fondness, oh! I would bless the hour when I left cities,

to

to dwell with thee, an humble, happy wife!"

Are not these the romantic wishes of many a youthful heart, till time, treachery, and commerce with the world, teach us that the visions of disinterested feeling seldom, if ever, find realization?

She now slowly continued her walk, laying on a descent, between two high mountains, the trees of which were so closely interwoven, that they formed a kind of covered grove; and at the end of a narrow path entered on the valley, which, indeed, exhibited a scene of almost arcadian beauty and simplicity: at the door of their cottages, the elderly vintagers were sitting to repose, after the heat of the day, while the younger parts of their family danced

sportively along to the jocund sounds of the tabor and pipe; here a shepherd, under the spreading of an acacia, bewailed the cruelty of his mistress, in the melting strains of his oboe; while, a little farther in the closest part of the thicket, sat the same flinty-hearted damsel, lamenting the perfidy of some more faithless swain; on another spot was a groupe of village politicians, discussing, with gravest import, the business of their little state; and, not far distant, a more trifling, though lessharmless, circle of females were assembled,—here flew the reputation of one, and the good name of another, while, in imitation of their superiors, all respect to the peace and tranquillity of their neighbours was disregarded; but what most attracted the attention of Viola, was a company of children, some engaged in plucking the wild roses from the

the hedges, others chasing the gaudy butterfly with their caps, while the rest, with quiet, eager attention, were listening to the fear-inspiring tales of their companions, and trembling at the very stories themselves recounted. These Viola pronounced were happy; yet, as she gazed on the little plans of their various amusements, she traced, with regret, the budding of each infant passion, grieving that ever they should blossom. She now soon reached the termination of the valley, and, according to the direction of Bianca, perceived an angle to the right; turning the corner of a narrow precipice, she gained the pass, which descended a few paces, at the bottom of which ran a clear and liquid stream, meandering round a small cottage, miserably thatched with the decayed boughs of trees, and so worn away as to ad-

mit the damp and rain in various places. This, from its desolate appearance, she conjectured to be the abode of Gradisca, and was making the best of her way towards it, when her eye was attracted by one of the most interesting objects she had ever beheld: on the side of the fountain reclined the figure of a young man, apparently about twenty; there was a proportion in his form, the disguise of his very homely apparel could not conceal; his hat, which a little girl, who sat beside him, was fancifully decorating with a wreath of wild flowers, lay upon the bank, and released from its confinement a quantity of dark chesnut hair, which waved over his shoulders, and whose parting disclosed a forehead of the clearest brown, and most ingenuous expression; his cheek was pale and wan, and gave a

cast

cast of dejection to his full dark eye, as it bent mournfully on the ground, that would have melted the sternest heart in his favour; his nose was aquiline, his mouth perfectly formed, and there was a candour and superiority in the whole contour of his face; in one hand he held a little dog, while the other was engaged in tracing, with his finger, grotesque figures in the sand. Viola remained at some distance, and regarded him in silence: presently he took a small flagelet from his pocket, and putting it to his lips, drew forth notes of such exquisite pathos and simplicity, as might have vied with those of the fabled Orpheus.

"WHY will you play that sad tune now?" said the child, twining her little fat fingers in the glossy ringlets of his hair; "you make me cry, and

I won't come any more evenings to keep you company by the brook here, if you do; and then you will only have Carlo, and he will not talk and sing to you, as I do."

At these words, the young man for the first time looked up; and it was then, from the wildness of his countenance, that Viola was certain she beheld the maniac Lorenzo.

"Do not leave me, Lilla!" he cried, in a voice that pierced her very soul, "don't leave poor Lorenzo! every one leaves poor Lorenzo:"—but, he added, with an unmeaning smile, and in a rapid sort of whisper, "when I am Lord of that great castle I told you of, I shall be rich Lorenzo, and I'll leave every body then!"——"Alas!" thought Viola, shuddering, "what

connexion

connexion in that thought!"—"Yes," answered the child mildly, "but then you must not say such things as that; beside, mother told me, when you talked in so great a hurry, I was not to stay with you; but yet I shall, for all what any body tells me, if you do not play that tune again, and make me cry so; for you know I cried enough yesterday, when Curio and Paulo took your grapes away; I wished I had been a man, Lorenzo, I would have beat them for it; but yet don't mind, for you shall always have half mine, that you shall!"

Lorenzo uttered not a word, but he returned the pipe into his pocket, and then cast such a look on his little companion as words could not describe.

" She now approached them. Lorenzo had resumed, with the same earnestness, his occupation of carving in the sand, while the child busied herself in throwing pebbles into the water. " Is that the cabin of Gradisca, my good child?" asked Viola, patting her head. " Yes, Signiora," she answered, " and if you want to go there, I can shew you the way, and take Lorenzo home at the same time, if you please."

As she spoke, he turned round, and seeing a stranger, hastily snatched up the dog, and was precipitately flying from the spot, when the voice of his young attendant arrested his course, and in an instant he stopped. " Don't go," she cried, without me, " the Signiora won't hurt you." Lorenzo fixed his eyes upon her for some moments,

ments, then fetching a deep and heavy sigh, he cried, "Won't you, Signiora, nor beat me, nor take Carlo from me? Oh no! you look so sweet, you could not!" then gazing round with a kind of cunning inquiry, he added, in an under, though vehement tone——"I hate men——I love only children and dogs!" and then regarding her, hesitatingly he said, "but I think I could love you, if you would let me." He put forth his hand; it was dry, and burning: Viola placed hers within it: "How chill!" he cried, drawing it through his arm, "here—I will warm it in my bosom, and it shall cool my heart:—You weep—why do you weep? Laugh," he added, with a convulsive smile, "laugh, as I do, at the bubbles in the brook." Poor Viola, who had borne her own misfortunes with firmness and fortitude, felt all give way before

before the contemplation of this height of human calamity: her hand, which he held tight within his, trembled violently, but not for worlds would she have withdrawn it. In this manner they walked on, Lilla following, holding the jacket of Lorenzo, at the same time admiring the dress of Viola, whose tears, soft as the dew of morning, fell as they went along: Poor Lorenzo! never before had the genuine drop of sympathy moistened thy flinty way. They reached the hovel in silence, which, true to the description of Bianca, was indeed the abode of penury and sorrow. At the little gate, or rather board placed across to serve as a defence, stood a woman, whose squalid look convinced Viola she must be Gradisca; she was between forty and fifty, tall, and there was something in her whole person strongly indicative

of

of better days; extremely infirm, one arm was tied up in a sling, while the other leant on her stick. In the sight of her nephew, all other objects were disregarded, for a faint smile passed over her face as she welcomed his return, and reproached his stay in the same breath. The young man made no reply, but pointed, with a look of pleasure, towards Viola, who now entered the cottage, the inside of which was in a state of such desolation, as she could have hardly conceived possible: one chair; a large fragment, taken from the rock, serving as another; a table, tottering with decay, and a small broken altar, on which was a crucifix, and image of the Virgin, made up the whole of the furniture; still it was cleanly, the air fresh and wholesome; for what they wanted in the embellishments of art, was amply repaid

repaid by the profuse liberality of natural adornments, and each casement was filled with flowers, sweet and grateful to the smell; "for these," cried Gradisca, "are comforts none can deprive us of."

Lorenzo had now taken his usual seat upon the stone, and in a gloomy reverie, remained quiet and absorbed in himself; his aunt having wiped their single chair with her apron, for the accommodation of Viola, then placed herself by Lorenzo; and Lilla, having kissed his cheek, received the evening blessing of Gradisca, and promised "she would come to-morrow at the usual time," skipped gaily out of the cottage, to pass the rest of her evening with her more chearful playmates.

"Thou

"THOU art a sweet one!" cried Gradisca, following her with her eyes, till the angle of the precipice obscured her from her view; "that child, Signiora, I may call the solace of my hapless hours; her mother lives hard by, and while all the young ones of the valley fly from my poor boy, this little benevolent creature leaves every thing to tend and follow him; she's here every morning by sun-rise, with her breakfast, to share with him; and though no one appears to humour his fancies more than Lilla, no one can manage him so well:—how fares the good Marchesa, Signiora?" she continued, "for if I mistake not, you come from her?"

"WELL! Gradisca," said Viola, with a deep and heavy sigh, "for she is in Heaven"——

"THEN!"

"THEN!" exclaimed the poor creature, clasping her hands, "my worst apprehensions are fulfilled: Now, Lorenzo! what will become of thee? I!" she exclaimed, "deserve all, can bear all; but thou, Lorenzo! art devoted ——Dark, oh God! and inscrutable are thy ways——but, oh spare! spare not the guilty! thou art all powerful—all just—thou canst remove the veil of years—thou canst"——

"GRADISCA!" interrupted Viola, in a grave and solemn tone, "I have heard much of thee; but the wild agitation I now witness, surprises and confounds me: every one must feel the loss of so excellent a character as the Marchesa, deeply, severely feel it; yet surely the Marchese would render you some assistance; and your poverty, though great, is not alone sufficient to affect

affect you thus; for I have heard, Gradisca, that in the dead of night, when quiet souls repose, and all's at peace, that thou dost wander, like a restless spirit, o'ercharged with some great crime."

"CRIME!" repeated the woman, with an expression where fear, scrutiny, and severity, were mingled; "Signiora! what mean you?"

"YOU shall stay here for ever!" said Lorenzo, hastily interrupting her—— "for ever——sleep here, and all night I'll watch by you."

"AH!" said Gradisca, "do not gaze so on me, Signiora; that look of yours recalls a sad circumstance to my remembrance; regard me not with such suspicion; you see before you one

one more weak than wicked; one who has paid the forfeit of her faults by years of torturing remorse."

"Alas!" said Viola, "forgive me if I wrong you, but I have learnt to think under the shade of mystery guilt must lurk; I do not seek to penetrate any history you may wish to conceal; yet, I know not why, something so extraordinary binds me to you, that I feel——I know not what——I would, if possible, do any thing to serve you; my means are circumscribed, yet still I think the Marchese might be brought"———

"Oh no!" hastily interrupted Gradisca, "name him not; you know not the peculiarities of my situation; I am watched, guarded; even at this moment I tremble lest Bernardo overhears

bears our conference, and you should fall a sacrifice."

"SURELY!" said Viola, trembling in every joint, "the Marchese cannot have done ought——that——bears not"——

"SIGNIORA," cried Gradisca, going hastily towards the door, "forbear—I dare not—cannot confide in you—hereafter I may——Hark! heard you not a noise? Oh, Signiora! stay not one instant longer! to-morrow, or the night after, if you could again steal to this abode of wretchedness, I will explain all I can; but I entreat you to be guarded; much, very much, depends on your circumspection: Signiora, farewell."——Viola placed her finger on her lips, in token of silence and acquiescence; and then hastening through

through the valley, was soon in view of the castle. When she entered the saloon, she sat down to recall her scattered ideas, for her mind was a chaos, where so many different thoughts contended for pre-eminence, that one so rapidly succeeded to another, as to bewilder and distract her; nor could she reflect on the mysterious being she had quitted, without sensations of interest and dread; Gradisca had said "her look recalled painful recollections!" to what could this allude? the Marchesa, on her death-bed, had assured her "no one was acquainted with the secret of her birth but herself." Lorenzo next arose to her fancy; his interesting form, the simple pathos of his wild appeals to her kindness, drew tears in torrents from her eyes; "and I am not able to assist this forlorn creature!" she exclaimed: "Oh poverty!

poverty ! it is now I feel thy biting !" The more she reflected on the late occurrence, the more was she determined to obtain another interview with Gradisca ; her terrors of the Marchese increased ; and when she thought of Father Zanotti, an universal tremor seized her. From this reverie she was interrupted by the entrance of Bianca, who, after asking a variety of questions relative to the poor souls she had been visiting, informed her that Father Jerome had said mass over the body, and she and Laurentine were to sit up with it ; " and I have taken the desk, Signiora, into your dressing-room, as I thought, perhaps, you had rather examine it there, than where you might be subject to interruption." Viola thanked her for her attention ; and requesting to have a light, waited while Bianca went to fetch one, and then

then retired to her own room for the night. How awful is the immediate contemplation of death! As Viola passed the chamber where lay the remains of her benefactress, her heart beat quick, her step was faultering and timid; the recollection, too, of what she had witnessed there the night before, filled her with awe and superstition; she looked through the shade of the long gallery, where the sable figure had vanished, but saw it not again: "too sure it was an omen of mortality," thought Viola, and the idea struck cold to her heart. When she reached her own room, the first object that appeared was the desk of her beloved Marchesa: ah! how many sad regrets did it not bring to her mind! the loud bell of the castle now chimed the hour of eleven; the moon shone with resplendent brightness; all was hushed,

hushed, save the nightingale, who warbled its plaintive song among the jessamine, that twined around the lattice; but not, as usual, greeted by Viola, who had once delighted in its note: Alas! when the harmony of the soul is fled, objects once delighting, charm no longer; 'tis an instrument out of tune; one chord broken, and the rest no longer vibrates to the touch of melody! She now felt in her bosom for the key, and was approaching the table where the desk was placed, when the sounds, as of a person pacing backwards and forwards under her window, distinctly struck her ear; she felt apprehensive, she knew not why; for that any of the inhabitants of the castle, tempted by the beauty of the evening, should be there enjoying it, was no uncommon circumstance. She listened, and presently distinguished the sound of voices in earnest conver-

sation ; one was familiar, and she fancied it to be that of the Monk Zanotti : she stood a few moments, in hopes of hearing the purport of their discourse, for that *he* should be there at that hour, particularly when he had excused himself from performing the ceremony over the Marchesa, surprised and confounded her. The tone of Zanotti was low and restrained, that of the stranger seemed to break forth in accents of impatience and complaint. Viola now felt impelled by an irresistible impulse to approach the window, yet the light was an obstacle to her purpose, and she remembered that near her dressing room was a small closet, or bondoir, containing books, where she deposited the lamp, and then taking her stand behind where the festoon of the curtain concealed her, had a compleat view of their persons ; they had moved from the spot where she first heard them, but

but by the light of the moon she plainly perceived the figure of the Monk Zanotti; his garments were wrapped closely round him, and his cowl drawn, so as to entirely disguise his face, still there was a majesty and peculiarity which she would have recognised among a thousand; the other was of low stature, but a cloak covering his whole person, left no means to discover who he was: again they spoke in a whisper; Zanotti seemed agitated and impassioned; presently he grew louder, and she distinctly heard these words:—

"The crisis is not far distant,"—— here the rustling of the leaves, as they waved in the breeze, prevented her hearing the conclusion of this sentence:—

"I am a wretch!" replied the stran-

ger,

ger, in answer to that part of Zanotti's speech she had lost, " the finger of God has marked me; for at night, when I return to my home, and think to rest my head in sleep awhile, the pillow's bathed in blood! those silver hairs all clotted! and then his groans so mingle in the blast, that shakes my dwelling, that I rise on fire!"——

" Hush!" replied Zanotti, in a still lower tone, " we shall be overheard: Patience! I entreat you, all will yet be well!—mark me, all shall be well!" They then seemed to confer on more amicable terms; faint and sick, Viola retreated from the window, though she did not fetch back her light, dreading, yet desiring to hear further; once more therefore she left her seat and approached the window; the stranger was gone, but Zanotti still walked

with

with long and hasty strides across the lawn; his pace was unequal; frequently he stopt, and with his eyes fixed on the earth, seemed wrapt in meditation. Viola now felt chill, and softly closing the lattice, hastened from it: "Gracious Providence!" she at last articulated, and clasping her hands together, "What words of dreadful import have I not heard? Such a man" she repeated, "I think the Monk Zanotti:—Wherefore, oh my soul! dost thou tremble with these sad portents? for am not I a being too insignificant to fear, too humble to be liable to dangers, too inoffensive to deserve them? Oh Bertoldo! if it indeed be true, that thy restless spirit yet wanders at the silent hour of night—perhaps—oh horrible suggestion! thy honoured form it was, that shot across me to seek a fratricide!" As much as possible she

now endeavoured to calm the agitation of her spirits, though she could not forbear once more stepping to the casement; but Zanotti had disappeared, and Viola, replacing the lamp on the table, prepared to seek the letters: with a beating heart she gazed on the superscription to Albenza · "Perhaps," she cried, her sensitive nature shrinking from the idea, "I am to bear a recommendation for myself:" the thought could not support reflection, and laying the letter beside her, she proceeded to examine further: she first discovered a variety of loose papers, containing extracts from different authors, and a treatise in manuscript, which, from the style and signature, she concluded was the Marchesa's own writing; this was regarded as a precious treasure, and its perusal deeply affected her. The letter to the Marchese was carefully enclosed

enclosed in an envelope; but, oh Heaven! what were her sensations, when, after the strictest search, after separating each paper carefully one from the other, and spreading them before her on the table, her own letter was not to be found! The sum, too, which the Marchesa had particularly named as being in the desk, was gone also! Viola could scarcely believe her senses; she did not speak, she did not weep; wonder and astonishment had absorbed every other faculty, for she saw herself, by this unexpected stroke, bereft of every support, without money, without friends, and dependant on a man she could never reflect on without horror. "My God!" she exclaimed, "what will become of me—whither can I go? Who now will succour—who protect me?" There did not exist one being in the world on whom she had a claim;

while as often as the idea darted across her, of what she had yet to perform in destroying the proofs of her own birth, she became still more miserable and apprehensive; yet she determined, whatever it might cost her, strictly to adhere to her promise, though till after the interment of the Marchesa it would be hazardous to attempt it, as persons regularly sat up with the corpse, added to which was the fear, that she might excite suspicion from the awe-inspiring Zanotti, now more dreaded than ever. Strange it was, that, in all the recurrences of thought, this man was ever the leading figure in her imagination, yet had she been asked to account for it, save from the opinion so recently delivered of him by the Marchesa, she would have been at a loss for a reply. Since the Marchese had left Morano, which was now three months, she had scarcely

scarcely ever seen him, for he was always disliked by the Marchesa, whose observations on his character had been formed with too much truth and discrimination, for her ever to receive pleasure or consolation from his society; seldom he suffered himself to enter into conversation, but when he did so, his eloquence and perspicuity were rarely equalled, and never excelled: in the midst of the largest and most chearful circle, he would sit absorbed, and abstracted; then start, and as if trying to shake off an oppressive burthen, enter for a while on the topic of the day, soon, however, to relapse into one of his ordinary and gloomy reveries; towards the Marchese his behaviour was most mysterious, his manner far from respectful, was proud, arrogant, and frequently bordering on contempt, while Morano seemed at once to fear,

hate, court, and shun him. Viola had often turned from the fixed gaze of his penetrating eye with a sensation she trembled at experiencing, for such an eye she thought she had never before seen; it was concealed, yet expressive of each movement of a soul, which might at once be the seat of extraordinary virtues, or almost unmentionable crimes: there was a lurking look of cunning and dissimulation at one moment; at another, they flashed in open indignation or haughty superiority; his conduct to Viola was inexplicable; often he would sit with his looks riveted on her countenance in so scrutinizing and earnest a manner as to alarm and distress her, then he would rise from his seat, and after pacing the apartment under great agitation, leave it without uttering a word. Now she reflected she was in a degree in his power; for though

though any one with the least discernment might have seen affection was not the bond which linked his fate to that of the Marchese, still he had unbounded sway in the castle, and his will was the law of its inhabitants. The clock tolled twelve, but she could not sleep; awake to all the horrors of her situation, poverty, desolation, dependance; she still continued to examine the desk, in the faint hope that the letter might have been overlooked in the eagerness of her first search; it was, however, no where to be found: "Could the Marchesa's mind have been wandering in her last hours?" thought Viola, but this idea was dismissed almost as soon as suggested, for she had evinced no signs of insensibility or derangement; eagerly she examined the lock, but it bore no marks of violence, and the key she was certain was that delivered

to her by her friend, and till this moment had been worn in her bosom. In this manner did she pass the principal part of a night, the longest she had ever known: in vain she tried to sleep, for unceasingly the events of the day crouded to her mind, and chased away tranquillity. With anxiety and apprehension she looked forward to the arrival of the Marchese, as an event that would at once decide her destiny; and she longed, yet dreaded, to meet Albenza, for in his remembrance each fond affection of her now desolated heart was centered: once, in the warm enthusiasm of the moment, when the cooler judgments were laid asleep, Albenza had confessed to Viola he loved her; yet young as she then was, such was the propriety of her character, the genuine rectitude of her disposition, that she received this avowal of his prefe-

rence

rence in her favour, as a signal for their meeting no more.

"No, my Lord!" she exclaimed, "incapable as I trust I have been, as I trust I am, of the paltry disguise of art or subterfuge, believe me, I can only shew how valuable I consider the gift you proffer me, by never proving unworthy of it; take back, my Lord, *that* heart, which would be the most dangerous inmate of my bosom, and with it take this assurance, that Viola di Benincasor, humble as she is, has too much honour to disgrace another, too much gratitude to plant a thorn within the breast, that sheltered and protected her."

Saying this, she hastily left him, while Albenza, as has before been said, full of love, admiration, and despair,

despair, sought the city. Yet, though Viola had had sufficient prudence to put a negative on the hopes of her lover, (for justice, duty, every principle, demanded it,) in her heart he reigned more despotically than ever! That she could ever be his wife, was an impossibility; but that she was dear to him; that there were times, when his remembrance might wander towards her, was a source of the only comfort she enjoyed. In proportion as her attachment strengthened towards the son, the more did her abhorrence of the father; for to her, gentle and unoffending as she was, with manners peculiarly calculated to excite tenderness and kindness, he had been ever hard and severe; as a child, he had ordered her to be kept from his presence, alledging "that children were nuisances he did not chuse to be annoyed with;

and

and that had the Marchesa studied his pleasure as much as her own gratification, she would not have introduced into his family this little foundling-beggar, to lavish that fondness on, to which her own son was alone entitled." The grossness of these insinuations preyed inwardly on the peace of his wife; but conscious of the integrity and purity of her motives, she seldom, if ever, replied to them."

VIOLA, therefore, had often been the cause of many violent attacks on his part, and much patient resignation on hers; for reasoning with the Marchese was quite out of the question, while, as she advanced in years, his dislike of her increased; for, if by any chance they encountered each other in the walks or grounds of the castle, he would fix his eyes sternly on her for some

some moments, then turn away, with a kind of angry impatience, and quickly strike into another path. His manner was, however, totally different from that of the still more formidable Zanotti, for though *he* awed and impressed her beyond all others, yet if ever his nature seemed capable of softness, it was when he addressed Viola: from this, it is more than probable, she would have applied to him, for assistance to gain admittance into some convent; but the dying words of the Marchesa unceasingly sounded in her ears: "Such a man I think the Monk Zanotti," and the intention, shuddering, fled her breast. More than ever did she now bless that warning, for eternally the midnight conference was in her thoughts; and she not only viewed the Abbate as a man of bad propensities, but as one privy to, or engaged in,

in, a murder. In Gradisca she had also endless food for conjecture; nor could she avoid concluding, from the mysterious words of this woman, but that she was acquainted with some hidden transactions relative to the Albenza family; yet all was a labyrinth, which the further she explored, the more was she bewildered and perplexed. Youth has ever so strong a propensity to the marvellous, that there are few who would not rather puzzle their way through the intricacies it occasions, than reach, by the strait road, a natural effect produced by a common cause. Perhaps, in all the rhetoric of philosophy, there does not exist so strong a proof of how early the human heart is in a state of vitiation, than this simple axiom. Reason would certainly lead us to suppose, the mind vigorous and unrelaxed requires not such strong incitements

incitements to call forth its uses; but content with the novelty and variety successively presented, need not seek, beyond the inexhaustible walks of nature, for its resources or amusements; that it would revolt from the recital of monstrous depravity, or dreadful crimes, with affright and disgust;—in the ages of primitive simplicity, this might have been the case; but in the modern epoch, minds are nurtured in a hot-bed, reach maturity ere they should bud, and at a period when they ought to ripen and bear fruit, the sap, corrupt and withered, runs to seed, and all its bloom is faded. This argument, which might be levelled at the generality with truth and justice, failed in its application to our heroine; for few had so early learnt the art of controuling their passions, or conquering their failings. Many will excuse the

most

most flagrant actions of their lives, under the fallacious idea, that man is born in error; but surely this is the weakest and most ignorant of all doctrines, since, from the equal distribution of our faculties, it is always in our own power to encourage the preponderation of virtue, and repel the encroachments of vice; these had been the lessons inculcated by the amiable Marchesa. "My child," she used to say, "there are no characters so despicable as those who think Fate intended them to be so; who sluggishly submit to be the slaves of vice, because they have not sufficient energy to counteract it; who vainly and impiously imagine 'it is the lot which Providence has marked out for them,' and consequently that it would be useless and ridiculous to strive against it; there are many will argue, that this sentiment arises from diffidence

diffidence or modesty; but I should be as apt to conclude it the effect of vanity, operating on a narrow mind, as I am convinced self-debasement is as pernicious, in its consequences, as self-importance, and both leading from that strait and open path through which duty and rectitude have directed us to steer our course. Never allow yourself to be incapable of any thing but a mean and ungenerous action; if you are good, it is in your power to be better; if bad, still remember, repentance never can be too late, and that there is no being under Heaven, however lost and infamous he may appear, but is reclaimable, and capable of amendment. In instances of the head as well as the heart, this principle still exists. All are not blest with genius; I say blest, because those who are gifted with it, are considered

as

as peculiarly favoured; but I cannot help calling it a dazzling meteor, oftener leading astray, than tending to our welfare or prosperity. Seldom indeed do you find the man, endowed with what is called superior and refined sense, possessing the more important advantages of solidity, perseverance, judgment or fortitude, rational understanding, or useful knowledge. The reason is an obvious one; these latter are to be acquired by patience and attention; and he who has succeeded in attaining, appreciates their worth, and studies to preserve them; but genius is of spontaneous growth; uncultivated, unassisted, it springs up, and intoxicates the mind; we think it can be as easily ensured as it seems to have been bestowed; like beauty, we find it, for a time, our passport through the world, and every other more essential qualification

lification is neglected. Yet believe me, of all the various properties bestowed on man, these two alone are perishable, and fleeting. Vice and virtue are immortal, and will most assuredly speak for, or against us, at the great account; but genius and beauty are more transient even than our existence. We witness their entombment ourselves, while the fickle and inconstant throng, for whom we prized them, then unheeding pass us by, or, if they do pause, to gaze upon the ruin, 'tis but to pity us for what we are, not in remembrance of what we have been." Such were the precepts of this most excellent woman! such the precepts, which raised up another to emulate her exalted conduct! Were every natural mother as scrupulously to fulfil her duties to her offspring, as had the Marchesa di Morano to this adopted or-

phan, how few would have reason to complain, in the impatient bitterness of their hearts, "that it is sharper than a serpent's tooth, to have a thankless child."

THE approach of day-light was now dispelling the gloom and sombreness of her feelings; fatigued with want of sleep, she arose from the bed, (on which, without taking off her clothes, she had sat half the night,) and opened the lattice to inhale the breeze; almost insensibly her eye wandered over the variegated landscape, for, absorbed in itself, her mind had little taste for external objects; the sun was rising majestically in the east, and tinging the tops of the trees with its golden beam; the birds gaily warbled their matin song; the vintagers were seen in picturesque distances, going forth

forth to their daily toils, some winding round the precipices, others descending the steps of the mountain, but all laughing as they trolled along, with aspects of peacefulness and content. With some impatience she awaited the entrance of Laurentine or Bianca, as from one of them she hoped to gain further information of Gradisca, respecting whom she felt uncommonly interested, more particularly as she wished to learn the Marchese's reasons for thus persecuting a poor friendless creature, whose claims on his bounty seemed stronger than those of any other tenant on his estate, but who certainly was in a situation of almost unprecedented poverty and wretchedness; buried in thought, she still continued at the lattice, leaning on her hand, when music, so sweet and melancholy, caught her attention, as deprived her of every faculty,

faculty, save that of listening; so low it was, that she almost feared to breathe, lest a note should escape her; and so soft, so soothing was the subject, that Viola giving way to the enthusiasm of the moment, wished, that like the Cygnet, she could have expired in its strain; but from the extreme earliness of the morning, and the distance from the castle, she could have fancied "that the tune of" Lorenzo, which had unceasingly vibrated on her ear, still pursued her; now it swelled high on the gale! "How sad that note!" she cried, pressing back the jessamine, to try and discover the musician; as she did this, she thought she distinguished the sound of a well-known voice; she paused! her conjectures were shortly confirmed, for ascending the hill to her right, was Lorenzo, led by his

companion Lilla; the casement she stood at, looked directly over the ascent, so that she had a full view of her unexpected visitants, whose appearance was, if possible, still more engaging than it had been on the preceding day. Lilla, with her innocent countenance drest in smiles, skipped over the verdure with the light steps of a fawn; while Lorenzo, to whose pale cheek exercise had given a faint glow, and whose profusion of dark ringlets wantoned in the zephyr, afforded, in his tall and finely turned figure, a striking contrast to his little fat companion. Sometimes she stopped to pluck for him the wild flowers that sprung beneath her feet; or holding him in an attitude of attention, make him listen to the feathered harmonists, who charmed her with their melodies. Viola

beheld them with delight, nor could she resist (as she gazed on the expressive countenance of the child,) exclaiming in the beautiful language of a foreign author, "Good God! how could I lead such a creature as this round the world with me!" Desirous now to hold some conversation with them, she left her chamber, and soon reached the spot where they had seated themselves. "My sweet child," she cried, "how far you have strayed with your charge this morning! I hope Gradisca knows of your coming, otherwise she would be uneasy; and you would not make her so, I am sure."

"Not for all the world," replied Lilla; "I would not make any body sorry; but Gradisca said I might bring Lorenzo here, for he laid awake talking

of you all night, Signiora; but Gradisca told us we must not enter the castle for our lives, and if we saw an ugly black-looking man, called Bernardo, we were to run away directly.

"But this," cried the maniac, taking up her last words with quickness, "is my castle, and I will live here for ever, and you shall live with me;" he added, lifting his fine eyes to Viola, "and we will be so happy! look," taking something from his garment, "I have twisted thee a bracelet; I cut it from my hair; I gathered thee a nosegay also, but when I had done, I laughed and sported it down the winds, as men do feelings."—

"Ah my poor wanderer!" said Viola, passing her arm through his, and looking in

in his face, "was it right to have thus followed their example? In this, you prove how much you are a man, they do but trample on the bud they have blighted; oh Lorenzo! thou shouldst have worn thy flowers in thy bosom."——

"I MEANT to have sheltered them in thine," he cried, "but for a reason —people say I have no reason, but you'll see——there was a thorn among them;" and he added, in a wild impetuous tone, "I would not plant one in your breast; so I blew away the roses, for fear you should have been wounded by the thorns."

"ALAS!" said Viola, "so fair a mansion to be so stripped, so plundered of its brightest ornament, 'tis a sad

pity; oh! how would I cherish thee, Lorenzo! how would I entice thee back to sense and reason! I would pour the balm of pity on thy wounded brain, and be to thee as a sister; but I can be no one's sister; I am without parents, friends, or one single tie to bind me on earth; but let me not think thus Lorenzo, or soon I shall share thy calamities, as well as thy sorrows."

"We must go now, Signiora," said the little girl, "for Gradisca said we were not to stay after people were stirring, and on that side of the castle I see a man peeping from the window."

"Oh, haste then!" exclaimed Viola, "and do not venture here again; it

it may be dangerous for you to do so."

"Ah!" said Lilla, shaking her head, "Lorenzo will be so moping all day now, I dare say he will go rambling into the woods till night, and not let any one find him; he does so very often, and when he comes home, he looks so pale and so wan, and Gradisca cries so."——

"Why do you cry, Signiora?" she continued, observing the tears course down Viola's cheeks, "I thought Ladies like you never cried."——

She now kissed her little hand, with a natural grace many of her superiors could not have equalled; and drawing Lorenzo from the spot, they

were soon out of sight of Viola, who, after following them with her eyes, till they wound into the depth of the valley, retired to her own apartment, where she soon after sunk into a quiet slumber.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

"All that the thought can frame, or wish require,
To steep the ravish'd senses in delight,
The sumptuous feast, enhanc'd with music's sound,
Fittest to tune the melting soul to love;
Rich odours, breathing choicest sweets around."

LOWTH.

"IF you should steal away the heart of some fair lady, Signior," said Carlo, when he had finished his attendance in his master's dressing-room, it will not be from any pains you have taken with yourself to-night, I am sure."

ALBENZA smiled, and ordering Carlo to inquire if his carriage was ready,

prepared, with great reluctance, to obey his father's commands, in accompanying him to the Montebino Villa. "It was odd," he thought, "that in all the circles he frequented, he had never met either the Conte or his daughter; of the latter he had heard much, that is, of her beauty, fashion, and the brilliant parties she attracted to her house; but these were not calculated to create her an interest in his heart, who, though a warm admirer of beauty, did not think it entirely compensated for the want of those mental embellishments, which add lustre to the finest eyes, and expression to the fairest face. He had not far to go, the villa being only at a short distance from his own on the bay, and he had frequently remarked the elegance with which it was fitted up, and the splendour and gaiety which seemed to reign

reign throughout the whole. When he reached the Morano palace, he found the Marchese waiting with some impatience, nor did he forbear a severe animadversion on the tardiness of his son, who he affirmed was two hours after his time; this was, however, all that passed during the drive, for Albenza, unwilling to enter into another altercation, knew his best resource was in silence. It was now near midnight; but never, he thought, had he witnessed so delightful a scene: the moon, shining on the bay, cast a soft and silvery light, finely contrasted with the brilliancy of the lamps which illuminated the different villas; myriads of stars twinkled in the firmament, that from its clearness seemed scarcely to have lost the azure of its meridian; a profound stillness reigned around, or only at intervals interrupted by the

faint dashing of the oars in the water, the murmur of Lazzaroni, or the distant sounds of mirth and conviviality. They soon stopped before a flight of marble steps, leading up to an extensive sloping lawn, on which rooms, brilliantly lighted up, and full of company, opened; the air, impregnated with the perfume of the orange, citron, and flowering myrtles, almost overpowered with its fragrance, while the ear was ravished by the "harmony of sweet sounds" coming from the different saloons; groupes of lovely women, and elegant men, were scattered over the lawn; here were some sportively gliding through the dance, while others, reclined on banks embroidered with flowers, were accompanying the soft tones of their lutes in the melting strains of their country; now the sweet cadence of a female voice thrilled in transport-

transporting numbers to the heart; again the fine tenor of a manly tone raised the soul to grandeur and sublimity. They now entered a large saloon, which, for taste and magnificence of decoration, far exceeded all others Albenza had ever beheld; besides a profusion of variegated lamps, were large golden tripods, depending in chains from a ceiling ornamented with allegorical paintings by the finest masters, representing the race of Atalante, the departure of Æneas from Carthage, and the loves of Hero and Leander; baskets, bending beneath the weight of the tuberose, jessamine, and myrtle, filled up each space of an apartment, the floor of which was covered with an Indian matting of the richest colours and most fantastic device; a fanciful drapery of silver-shaded Persian taffety cast a tempered brilliancy on

on every object; couches of the same were placed around, while Etruscan vases teeming with sweets, large mirrors reflecting forms of the most fascinating description, cabinets of the most costly workmanship, together with the laugh, the song, the music that resounded, conveyed to the mind an idea that it was the enchanted residence of some immortal being. The Conte was waiting at the entrance, and received the Marchese with the familiar good humour of an old associate, while extending his hand to Albenza, (as he cast his eyes in admiration on his fine manly person,) he gave him the most polite and cordial welcome, rallied him in the easiest manner on his having so long been a stranger to his father's most intimate friend, and concluded with saying, " he must immediately introduce him to his daughter, who

was engaged in one of the farther saloons:" Albenza bowed respectfully on the pressure; and followed the Conte, who amused him in their tour through the rooms with a lively account of every remarkable person that passed them. Nothing could be more pleasing than the manners, or less restrained than the parties, of the Conte di Montebino; all was gaiety and fascination; the little world of Naples seemed included in them; but if the specious behaviour of Montebino had in a degree succeeded in its effect on Albenza, how much more did he acknowledge the influence of his senses, when in terms the most flattering he presented him to the Lady Olivia. Much as he had heard of the uncommon beauty she possessed, it fell in description far short of what in reality it proved; reclining in the most graceful attitude on a sofa,

rested

rested the divinity of this fairy palace, surrounded by a croud of young Neapolitans, each contending for a smile, and submitting to the tyranny of the lovely despot with the servility of Persian slaves. She was dark, and her countenance certainly wanted that sweetness and ingenuousness so peculiarly displayed on Viola's; hers was that kind of face, from which a painter would have copied his Cleopatra; its natural expression was proud, violent, and majestic; its assumed one, soft, tender, and bewitching; and to a form which might have vied for symmetry with that of the Grecian Venus, she united a playfulness of imagination, and a ready flow of language, which passed with the indiscriminating for sense and genius; yet her wit was dazzling, not clear; her observations more alluring than just: and though the

Signiora di Montebino rarely failed to entrance the senses, she never satisfied the understanding, or reached the heart; and while all admired the casket, all found, on examination, that it contained but a counterfeit gem, of little value: a short conversation, in which she evidently threw out her most attractive lures, soon convinced Albenza, that independant of the unalterable attachment he felt for another, she was the last woman in the world who could make him happy; she was a passionate lover of music, and a scientific performer; but while Albenza applauded her execution, he could not forbear a sigh to the memory of Viola's little simple airs, which she used to accompany with so much pathos and delicacy. The Conte was still in the meridian of life, a libertine both in theory and practice, with seductive manners,

manners, pleasing person, and elegant address; an adept in gaming; his assemblies were notorious for high play, but as his fortune was reputed to be immense, all were too well entertained at his expense to inquire into his resources, or animadvert on the profligacy of his conduct.

While the smiles of beauty, the charms of music, and the graces of wit and conversation, were all displayed to engage the attention of Albenza, the Marchese had engaged at play, in the hope that this night would prove more propitious than the last, and that one lucky throw would enable him to repair some of his great and recent losses; his spirit seemed to have been a prophetic one, for in the space of a quarter of an hour he found himself a considerable winner: gaming had

had ever been one of his most favourite pursuits, and having studied under a skilful master of the art, (for Ubaldo had first initiated him into this vice,) he was in general more than an equal match for his adversary; flushed with success, and exhilarated by the quantity of wine with which he plied himself, he still continued to sweep all before him, exulting in the mortified looks of his opponent, who, with the desperation of a madman, continued to bet higher and higher, in proportion as his losses increased. A party had now collected round them, among whom was Montebino, a Signior Valverdi, and a Frenchman, whom he had introduced, without mentioning his name, to the Conte as his particular friend. Montebino, who was engaged at the moment in earnest conversation with another person, bowed

his

his welcome, and took no further notice; but the stranger had excited universal curiosity: he seemed about five and thirty, of noble port, and most dignified carriage, while a shade of melancholy on his very handsome countenance, gained him involuntary interest and respect from all. As he walked, leaning on the arm of Valverdi, a cry of "who is he?" was echoed on all sides, but no one could give a satisfactory answer, for no one knew him. The important game had now attracted most of the men to the spot; but while many pitied his unfortunate antagonist, all betted on the victorious Marchese, who still continued to push his success with looks of triumphant malignity. Albenza, too, joined in the crowd collected round the table, and there beheld, while his heart burnt with honest indignation, his

his profligate parent, almost in a state of inebriety, hurling down ruin and despair on the head of a deluded fellow-creature, whose youth and inexperience ought alone to have been his protection. At that moment, Albenza felt he could have sunk into the earth; he felt the blush of shame crimson his manly cheek; the pang of mortification rend his virtuous and noble breast, as casting another anxious look on the inflamed countenance of the Marchese, he darted from the place in an agony almost insupportable.

Montebino, Valverdi, and the stranger, had now taken their stand close behind Morano.

"Bravoe, Marchese!" cried the Conte, "I never witnessed better play in my life:"—Addressing the Frenchman, "your countrymen are, I know, dis-

distinguished for their skill, but I think, Signior, you may now yield the palm to our Italy without hesitation."

"I AM no judge," returned the Frenchman, sarcastically, "and am not prejudiced in favour of the vices of one nation more than another, individually speaking, my Lord." He continued, in a clear and steady tone of voice, "I have seen the art carried to higher perfection than it is to-night, but I acknowledge it was then by one of your countrymen."

"THAT'S a bold assertion!" said Montebino, as the Marchese raised a look of anger and contempt towards the Frenchman; certain it is a very transient one sufficed, for he started, and while the heated blood forsook his cheek, turned hastily, and appeared to pursue his game with increased earnestness.

ness. But this incident had not passed unobserved; and many noticed, with wonder and suspicion, the involuntary shudder he gave, at first sight of the stranger, and the tremor which, notwithstanding his efforts to conceal it, visibly affected his enervated frame; while the foreigner, as if conscious of his power, moved, and standing exactly opposite Morano, proceeded in the conversation with the most perfect coolness.

"You must remember the person I allude to, my Lord," speaking to Montebino, "for he was much talked of in Naples; I happened to be a resident in this city for a short time at that period, and never shall forget the impression his appearance alone made upon my mind."

"If

"If you play with such inattention, my Lord Marchese," said the Baronne, who was Morano's adversary, "Fortune will prove a jilt at last."——

"The Marchese becoming every instant still paler, called for more wine, and filling out a bumper, requested Montebino to pledge him, and observing, with forced calmness, "that she was a capricious jade," threw again and again unsuccessfully. He would now have given worlds to have left the table, particularly when he beheld the looks of all fixed with serious scrutiny on himself; in honour, however, he was prevented going, and therefore still continued to play, and to lose.

"We are quits my Lord, now," said

said his companion, "for more than half the sum you had won from me."

"ETERNAL curses on the dice!" muttered the Marchese, and once more he caught the impressive eye of the Frenchman rivetted on his countenance.

"I THINK," said Montebino, "I have some recollection of the man you speak of; he was an extraordinary, mysterious character, and notorious for"———

"THE greatest atrocities," interrupted the stranger; "he became at last amenable to the laws of his country for murder; there was, however, much interest made to get him off; and it was said he was particularly

protected by a Neapolitan of distinguished rank, who, for some private reasons, consented to be absolutely the slave of this villain: it however was mere report, and consequently might have been unfounded."

"Now you speak of him," replied the Conte, "I perfectly remember to have both heard and believed this story; he escaped, after condemnation, from the prison in which he was confined, and has never been heard of from that time, which is now full twenty years ago."

HERE a loud shout from the friends of the Baronne, confirmed his victory over the Marchese, and for a time suspended the conversation; while Morano, furious with rage and disappointment, and ghastly from contending

tending passions, still continued to throw; affirming, with the most dreadful execrations, "that he would sit to eternity, rather than give in."

THE Frenchman cast on him a look of mingled disgust and contempt, then sighed deeply.

"Do you remember the name of the man you were just now mentioning, Signior?" asked the Conte.

"THERE was a person exactly answering your description," said Valverdi, "who was called"——

"UBALDO," quickly interrupted the Frenchman, and looking sternly in the face of the Marchese; "a more dangerous man never existed; loaded with crimes of the blackest dye, he

 possessed

possessed such wonderful and seductive powers, as to impose on all, who were not fortunate enough to have discovered his real character; but however guilt may flourish for a transient period, retributive vengeance must at last overtake it. There can be no friendships among the wicked; interested combinations are the only ties which bind them to each other; the higher villain, therefore, soon forgets, in security, the obligations he lies under to an inferior colleague; or if he does remember them, 'tis but to plot how he may rid himself of so galling a memento; thus they at length both fall into the snare each laid for the other, and then, when too late, with bitterness acknowledge, that virtue alone is happiness on earth. Murder," he continued, while his words seemed to fix his auditors in profound attention,

attention, "never escapes detection in the end; it is a stain that cannot be washed away; a mark, no hand but that of justice can efface. Was there not one living witness to prove it, it would be written even in the eyes of the offender!"

"Look to the Marchese!" exclaimed the Baronne, rising hastily from the table, "we must adjust our difference some future opportunity; in the mean time, I will seek the Signior di Albenza."

Morano was now literally gasping for breath; he tried to speak, but his voice failed, and the words died away on his lips; his eyes rolled wildly round, as if in search of some object; his looks were wild and haggard; and

strong convulsions seemed to shake his whole body.

In the confusion this occasioned, the stranger, with Valverdi, had disappeared. Morano at last articulated, "I fancy the pressure of the officious throng has caused me this sudden giddiness;—desire my son" (speaking to one of the servants,) "to attend me. I thank you," he added, addressing Montebino; "I am better—well now—we shall meet to-morrow, shall we not, my friend? Curses on the game, I am a considerable loser after all."

"Aye, Marchese!" said a keen looking Italian, who had been hitherto a silent observer of the scene, "that Frenchman acted like a spell upon you."

Morano

Morano bit his lips, but affecting an air of indifference and composure, said, turning from him to Montebino, "who was the Signior that accompanied Valverdi to-night, did you know him?"

"No one knew him," answered the latter, "he is a stranger here, and I could by no means learn his name; it was an unpleasant circumstance, and but that I owe Valverdi some civility, I should have declined the honour of receiving him: notwithstanding, I must own he had the manners and appearance of a gentleman, and I confess has much excited my curiosity."

"It will not be worth your while to enquire further respecting him," answered Morano, in a tone of peevish

anxiety; "some duel, or intrigue, or business of that kind, brings him here, you may depend on it; and it is certainly no affair of ours."

"'Tis a pity the Frenchman should not hear you, my Lord," said the Signior who had before spoken, and glancing at the same time a penetrative eye towards Morano, "for he seemed much inclined to pry into the secrets of others."

"Hah!" said the Marchese, "what mean you, Signior? do you dare insinuate that he could possibly allude to"———

"I DARE," interrupted the other, hurt by the haughty manner of Morano, look all men in the face,—which,

give me leave to say, my Lord, my own ocular demonstration convinces me you cannot."

"DRAW, villain!" exclaimed the half-frantic Marchese, "that I should be thus insulted!——by my life and name, 'tis more than I will bear!—unhand me, Signiors," he vociferated, making a pass towards his opponent, "or I will cut my way through him that stops me!"

"I HOPE," said the object of his ungovernable rage, and quietly parrying the blow, "I am too much a man of honour to take advantage of one evidently intoxicated, and as evidently smarting under the pressure of some unpleasantly awakened feelings." Saying this, he bowed, and left the room.

"CONTE," said the Marchese, "I cannot say your society has been as select this evening as usually it is;" then taking his hand, "my dear friend," he added in a whisper, "I am at present reduced to some trifling embarrassments, which my ill luck to-night has not tended to diminish, and but that I depend on your well-known friendship, I should be rather aukwardly situated."

"YOU may trust to me," answered Montebino; "in the mean time I hope love has been more propitious to your son, than fortune has to you."

"I HOPE so," replied the Marchese. Who, at that moment, could have beheld his inflamed countenance, his haggard, frenzied look, and believed hope was a sentiment he knew either

how to feel, or to express? It is the never-failing prop of unmerited misfortune, but the guilty bosom ever bars its entrance. Among the many silent spectators of the events of the night, had been the unhappy Albenza; in wretchedness he had retired from the disgraceful scene, but, mortified and miserable, had again returned, to witness, with horror, the volume of dreadful matter unfolded in his father's appearance: one instant he determined to seek the Frenchman, and demand an explanation of his conduct; and another, publickly and openly to expostulate with the Marchese, on the impropriety of his behaviour: torn and agitated by sensations, doubly painful, because widely contrasted, his feelings became almost insupportable; a light figure too, crossing him at the moment, by recalling the image of

Viola to his mind, recalled also the keenest of his woes. When Albenza left the castle of Morano, we cannot say, with the generality of the stoic heroes of romance, that he sought a cure for his hopeless predilection, in the solitude of reflection, or by any powerful exertions of reason or philosophy. No—Albenza was a mere mortal; perhaps one of more impassioned sentiments, ardent affections, or livelier emotions, did not exist; yet these, which, when properly regulated, were the noblest workings of his heart, had sometimes led him into difficulties, always, however, followed by repentance and amendment: impatient under controul, the firm rejection of Viola to his suit, had but increased his passion; and while he argued himself into the belief, that his leaving her was the result of justice and rectitude, pique,

in

in reality, had much to do with it.

On his arrival at Naples, therefore, pleasure and dissipation were the resources he flew to, yet they afforded but a short-lived consolation, and one which, to a mind of innate goodness and refinement, was very ineffectual: he was soon disgusted, avoided the busy "throng, miscalled society," and buried in the gloom of his own thoughts, the once gay, lively Albenza, became a burthen to himself, and a spiritless companion to the few who sought him. The time had been, and before his heart had become irrevocably another's, when the insinuating loveliness of the daughter of Montebino might have had power to captivate the senses, and mislead the judgment, of the open, unsuspecting young man

man it had long been her interest and desire to attach; but he now gazed on her features with an apathy he could not conceal, and listened to her conversation with an indifference he did not seek to repress; yet, however the vanity of Olivia might be wounded by his coldness, her mind was too narrow to appreciate the delicacy of affection, and in becoming the wife of Albenza, the dearest wishes of her selfish and politic nature would be gratified; he, on the contrary, had no view but love; no idea of happiness beyond that which it was in the power of Viola di Benincasor to impart: sometimes he determined to write to his mother, to acknowledge his attachment, and endeavour to gain her consent to an immediate and private marriage; he knew the liberality of her nature considered the adventitious advantages of wealth and nobility

lity insignificant, in competition with those rare qualifications which would render the possession of Viola the richest and most invaluable of blessings. To how many schemes of felicity and delight did this romantic idea not give rise: to be all to her, who was every thing to him; to be the guardian of her honour, the protector of her fortunes, the friend, the lover, the husband of her on whom his soul doated, transported him beyond himself, and Albenza forgot his father, Olivia, the unknown Frenchman, and all the world. The difficulty of concealing her from his father, the secrecy under which he must steal to the dwelling of his plighted love; the care, the circumspection, with which he would hoard the treasure it contained, all, by favouring the enthusiasm of his character, only increased his desire to

realize

realize that visionary bliss none but so young a lover could have fancied. From this reverie he was startled by the Baronne informing him of his father's sudden indisposition. Albenza obeyed the summons without hesitation, nor could he forbear the supposition, that the unexpected illness of the Marchese was occasioned by the sight of the mysterious foreigner who had given him so much uneasiness, and whose story he was convinced bore some dark reference to the past events of his father's life; what those events could be, troubled and dismayed him; a high sense of honour was a leading trait in his character, and the idea that that honour should be tarnished, was an idea he could very ill support. He found the Marchese evidently labouring under the greatest agitation, but affirming he was well, and insisting

to

to go; the carriage was waiting, and Morano reminding the Conte of his promised early visit in the morning, took his leave, followed by Albenza, more than ever determined to form no connexion with a family towards whom he could not forbear feeling repugnance and suspicion. They proceeded to the palace in silence, Albenza unwilling to interrupt it, and the Marchese fearing by an abrupt inquiry to frustrate plans now more essential to him than ever: disordered by the intemperance he had indulged in, he drew his cloak over his face, and counterfeiting sleep, reached home without the effort of a word.

THE result of Albenza's contemplations during the drive, was a resolution at once to put a decided negative on the intended marriage; for which purpose,

purpose, instead of setting down the Marchese, he followed him up the steps of the palace, saying, "he wished to speak with him before they parted for the night." Had Albenza been of a temper less rash or impetuous, he would have foreseen that his father's present disposition of mind was very unlikely to prove propitious to himself, but the subject was infinitely too near his heart to admit of such cold monitors as prudence or precaution; the air, however, together with the agitation into which the Marchese had been thrown, at the unexpected mention of Ubaldo, had much contributed in restoring him to sobriety; his own reflections, indeed, had convinced him, that he was but too sensible to many goading recollections; and much as he wished to have retarded an explanation with his son, he could find no reasonable

reasonable excuse to do so; his mind, the dark record of harrowing retrospections, was now cast on such a sea of trouble and disquietude, as required time to recall its scattered resources, and obtain composure: as it was, he feared to excite suspicion in Albenza, and almost overpowered with a variety of emotions, he staggered to the first seat which presented itself, fainting and motionless. Albenza flew to his assistance, and after rendering all the service in his power, entreated him to walk into the air, and restore his spirits. The Marchese, rejoiced at the opportunity, quitted the apartment, for in the privacy of his own, he hoped to argue himself into tranquillity and oblivion; but in vain; each step he measured, the image of the Frenchman stalked before him; each echo of the gale seemed to swell the name of Ubaldo

Ubaldo in dreadful reverberation on his ear; Ubaldo, the dark mysterious arbiter of his destiny, the tyrant of his fate, now rose in horrible array, and hurled him to despair. In the bitterness of thought, in the agony of mental suffering, how did memory trace back the years that were past, and present to his tortured fancy the once young, dissipated Moraldi, sacrificing his future peace, and hopes of happiness, at the shrine of vicious propensities! These, however, were but short-lived sensations, forcibly recalled by the sight of a man bearing a striking resemblance to one long since buried in the tomb; that he had brought back unwelcome intruders to the soul of Morano was most certain; he had even for a short period filled him with remorse and repentance; but when, by the revolvement of past occurrences, he felt

felt convinced security might yet be his own; when again the bad workings of his disposition prompted the means to make it "doubly sure," was he deterred by the recollection of past offences, from the perpetration of present ones? No. Did yet the still small voice of one lurking principle of religion awe him from his purpose? No. The Marchese di Morano sought in this climax of depravity the only resource against himself; for could he, whose whole life had been one palpable denial of his Maker, allow to himself that such a Maker existed? Hell—madness was in the thought; and he flew, as his only consolation, to the degrading credence, that the soul sinks in the corruption of the body, and both expire together. This system was now the hope that supported him; and while the Marchese practised the

the forms and ceremonies of devotion in public, he was in heart an atheist and disbeliever. Having traversed the apartment for some time, he soon reasoned himself into that collected frame of wickedness, from which he was determined no casual occurrence should now force him to depart: "Shall I," he cried, "gall the remainder of my days by childish, feminine apprehensions? No! rather let me seek that annihilation I do not fear to meet: Albenza, wedded to my wishes—and then," he cried, his voice trembling with passion, "one bold attempt places me beyond the power of men—and God I fear not!" He was now interrupted by the hasty entrance of a servant with a letter, brought express from the castle; it informed him of the death of his wife, and was written by Zanotti.

"Was

"Was it well done, my Lord?" said Albenza, who now entered the room, and stood before his father, almost transfixed with grief; "was it well done, thus to deprive me, by an artifice, of a consolation your tyranny never should have withheld from me?—My mother!" he exclaimed, energetically clasping his hands, "thy wearied eyes are closed for ever, and thy unhappy son shall never behold thee more!"

"Whining boy!" said the Marchese, who could scarce conceal the joy he felt at the success of his plans, "is it thus manly and vigorous minds lament for the ordinary courses of nature? Your mother wished her death: she was one of those constitutionally discontented beings, to whom life was rather a burthen than a blessing; she was"——

"Hold,

" HOLD, my Lord!" cried Albenza, his face glowing like crimson, " nor by aspersing the memory of that ever revered parent your cruelty has precipitated to the grave, oblige me to forget the sacred tie there is between us, or to learn, that in a case of injury, there is no distinction between man and man! She was a virtuous, an insulted woman; therefore I protect her: she was the best of mothers; curses, therefore, on the lips that dare profane her character! Hear me, my Lord! I am not the whining boy you please to call me; I will guard persecuted innocence, against malice and treachery, with my life's blood: before we part, it is necessary I undeceive you on the hopes you may have formed relative to my alliance with the daughter of Montebino, for never will I take to my arms as a wife, the woman my heart does

does not open to receive: I confess it is in your power to render me extremely miserable, to oppress, to abandon me; hard as is the alternative, it is better that, than that I should abandon myself; I can forfeit the dignities and privileges annexed to my rank, but I will never forfeit the dignity of my nature; I love Viola di Benincasor; I offered her my hand, my faith she has long possessed, and she rejected me! But do not think, my Lord, that I will ever be the husband of Olivia; my opinion of her is inconsequential, and I will repress it; but unless Viola becomes my wife, the Albenzi must sink without an heir: your pardon, I have now done; I have candidly avowed my sentiments, and I haste to succour my deserted Viola, to guard the ashes of my sainted mother from that ignominy, from which, as your wife, my

Lord, I blush to say she has never been protected." Saying this, the impassioned young man left the room, and in the space of an hour was on the road to Lavora, leaving the Marchese so overcome with rage and fury, as to have only the power of cursing and denunciation left as his consolation.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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